SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES OF EXPATS IN VIETNAM: LINKING RELATIVE SOCIAL POSITION, THE HABITUS AND PRACTICE TO CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the subjective experiences of expatriates in Vietnam, considering their relative social positions and dispositions as they adapt to local structural and cultural conditions. It explores how markers of differentiation related to nationality, race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, marital/relationship status and parenting influence the subjective negotiation of positionality, the constitution of habitus and adaptive practices. It is driven by three questions: i) how do factors of distinction affect the experience of expatriates? ii) how are relative social positions, dispositions and practice involved in the adaptation process? And iii) can long-term expatriation or successive expatriations prompt forms of adaptation that have a significant impact on the configuration of personal and social dispositions? Key concepts are drawn from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, although I propose complementary notions in order to heed expatriates' subjective experiences and account for a potentially transformative habitus. Leaning more heavily on a phenomenological approach, the analysis focuses on the role of relative social positions and dispositions (dimensions of habitus) in the adaptation process. Structural and cultural conditions, along with deeply internalized ways of thinking/acting/being born of socialization, are taken into account, although emphasis is placed on the substance of narratives: the articulation of located perceptions, desires and needs, the apprehension of cross-cultural challenges, and the ramifications of adaptive and reflexive practices. This project draws on the results of 26 months of field observations, a survey administered to 300 respondents, 39 semi structured interviews and three thematic focus group sessions. The pairing of descriptive statistics and

frequency analysis on one hand, and qualitative analysis on the other, is an unusual approach that generates complementary inferences. This study confirms that social positions and dispositions affect the subjective experiences of expatriates; that some adaptation strategies are deployed to accommodate, rather than challenge, dimensions of habitus, while other attitudinal adjustments mark an evolution in social actors' dispositions. In some cases at least, it seems that relatively conscious reflexive and adaptive practices lead to the development of cross-cultural awareness and intersubjective engagements with profound effects on respondents' practices and identities.

DEDICATION

To my parents and husband, thank you for your unwavering support!

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INTRODUCTION

Considering the growth and diversification of expatriate communities in Vietnam and the country's rapid development, it seems timely to examine how Western expats adapt to local structural and cultural conditions. The case of expatriates in Vietnam is interesting because expat communities there are starting to thrive and diversify. With 1986 Doi Moi reforms and the 1992 constitution, new conditions were created for Vietnam to integrate the global market. This entailed the progressive opening of borders to foreigners and foreign trade, and a new attitude about the potential contribution of foreigners including Viet Kieu[1], who since, have been called upon to help spur development and take up new economic opportunities.

In the last decade especially, globalization and the intensified rhythms of transnational flows have allowed expat communities to take root in places that were once seemingly closed to the West and Western interests.

> Many Eastern European experts came to Vietnam under technical cooperation programs until the early 1990s, when the Soviet Bloc then collapsed. Only when Vietnam opened up its economy and started seeing waves of investment in the mid 1990s did foreign workers start arriving again in large numbers. According to the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), in 2009 there were some 75,000 foreign workers in Vietnam. (Intercode, 2008-2013)

Vietnam's rapid integration into the global economy[2] is now attracting a growing number of expatriates who venture into this receiving context in search of professional and

[1] The term Viet Kieu refers to individuals of Vietnamese origin, who have emigrated from Vietnam and who later, have been naturalized in a Western country, as well as their descendants, those who were born overseas. Most Viet Kieu have a Western background as Vietnamese diasporas are most significant in North America, Europe and Australia.

[2] It took a total of 12 years of negotiation and reforms before Vietnam was finally admitted as a full member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2007. Since then, especially with the opening of its

business opportunities. Since the Vietnamese workforce is relatively low skilled, there is a demand for foreign experts and professionals to fill particular labor gaps. Meanwhile, the low cost of living and steady improvements in quality of life standards are making Vietnam an interesting option for families, retirees and other long-term or cyclically returning expats. Yet, Vietnam is still conceived mainly as a country of emigration, accounting for well-documented outflows of refugees and asylum seekers (despite a significant decrease in their numbers over the last decade), and for growing numbers of migrant workers. (Martin, 2009; Artajo, 2011; Ishizuka, 2013)

Baggio and Maruja (2007) reported that the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) estimated that the number of foreign workers in Vietnam steadily increased from 8,615 in 2004, to 12,900 in 2005, and jumping to 34,117 in 2006. More recently MOLISA reported that the number of foreign workers had swelled from 52,633 in 2008, to 55,428 in 2009[3] and 56,929 in 2010. Finally, the Ministry of Public Security estimated that this number jumped to an unprecedented 78,440 in 2011. (Dang Quang Dieu, 2012)[4] In a country of over 88 million people in 2012, foreign workers constitute less than 0.1% of the population. For 2011, it was estimated that 58% of

national stock exchange system in 2000, Vietnam has undergone unprecedented growth. Moreover, the BBC reports: "Vietnam, a one-party Communist state, has one of south-east [sic] Asia's fastest-growing economies and has set its sights on becoming a developed nation by 2020." (BBC News, Vietnam Country Profile Online)

[3] Important discrepancies exist in the publication of "official data" on the number of foreign workers. One report alleged that MOLISA estimated the number of foreign workers in 2009 at 75,000, of which only 39.7% had proper work permits. "Ho Chi Minh City reports the largest number of foreign workers, more than 50,000. Of this group, 10,480 have been issued documents allowing them to work. [Par.] In Hanoi, 15,357 foreigners were counted, including staff of diplomatic missions, of non-governmental aid agencies (NGOs) and foreign-invested projects in Vietnam." (Cao Minh - Vu Diep, 2009)

[4] Although MOLISA had anticipated the number of foreign workers to swell to 74,000 for 2011, it revised its estimate to 77,087 for 2011. (Investment & Trade Promotion Center HCMC, 2011; Pham Manh Hung, 2012)

foreign workers came from Asia and that "[m]ost of [them] are unskilled coming from developing countries" (Dang Quang Dieu, 2012: 10) despite the fact that "only highly skilled foreigners are [legally] allowed to work in Vietnam." (Hoang Phuong & Xuan Linh, 2009) Of the remaining 42%, it was estimated that 28.5% were European, (Investment & Trade Promotion Center HCMC, 2011) while the distribution of expats from North America and Australasia (Canada, the U.S.A, New Zealand and Australia) was not specified. English speaking expats represent a very small, relatively exclusive, and highly visible elite[5], which easily blends into the flow of millions of tourists.

Expatriates in Vietnam, like other migrant and diaspora groups elsewhere, are known to create relatively cohesive communities with hubs of cultural activity that emerge as they foster their collective language preferences, their national cultural identities and transnational bonds. Expatriate communities are necessarily composed of many different types of migrants, including 'modern nomads'[6] that orbit around the more stable elements of these communities. Conversely, expatriate communities are also composed of 'long-term stayers' that have vested interest in the receiving society.

I define an expatriate as: *A person who lives in a host society where he/she does not hold a formal citizenship; a person who is generally considered as an 'outsider' or*

[5] "Inspections in six provinces and cities (HCM City, Hanoi, Hai Phong, Quang Ninh, Tay Ninh and Lam Dong) showed that besides foreign workers who obey Vietnam's labour [sic] law, there are a number of foreign workers who have come to Vietnam on tourist visas. Among them, there are both skilled and unskilled labourers [sic]." (Vu Diep, 2009) Working expats "must have their employer register them with MOLISA and obtain a work permit from the Ministry and then a visa. Many foreigners, though, work on a tourist visa and receive no assistance from their employer as regards registration and applying for a work permit. While most head to a neighboring country every three months to obtain a new visa, there are some, primarily in manual employment, who choose to stay here illegally." (Intercode, 2008-2013)

[6] People who migrate from place to place, alone, with a spouse or a family unit, usually as a lifestyle or a temporary life-phase, or still as an adaptive response to global/local labor and market demand.

'foreigner' by locals (based on in- vs. out-group dynamics) and/or by the national administrative apparatus (on the basis of nationality); and whereby he/she will be required to become relatively familiar with the regional culture and the local distribution of resources in order to carry out daily 'routine-like' activities as a temporary or permanent resident, while maintaining formal and informal 'external' citizenship ties, as well as other forms of attachments with at least one other country of affiliation.

This definition sets out key criteria, such as the process of 'relative residential settlement' entailing adjustment requirements and relative habituation[7], the ascription of 'foreignness' by locals and receiving state institutions, the maintenance of substantive transnational ties with at least one 'homeland' on the basis of citizenship, kinship, political participation, property/asset ownership, tax/pension contributions, etc., as key features of expatriation. Most importantly, this definition is broad enough to transcend any issues with occupational typologies[8].

The problem of expatriate transience relates to the need to set apart tourists and 'travelers' from other categories of 'movers'. Essentially, tourism or short-term stays overseas do not entail setting-up a home in a foreign environment, so tourists and

[7] "The pages of social theory are actually replete with paeans of praise to the power of habit in human conduct to perpetuate social patterns. Dewey (1983), Husserl (1970), Merleau-Ponty (1974), Schutz (1972), Sorokin (1962, 1998), Parsons (1954), Elias (1972), Harré (1982), and Bourdieu (2000) may be included as only a few of the most influential among the many who have given socialised habit a central place in social explanation." (Nash, 2003: 44)

[8] Cohen (1977), who is commonly sited by contemporary authors (Leonard, 2010b; Rogaly & Taylor, 2010; Olsen & Martins, 2009; Selmer & Lauring, 2009), defines the term expatriates, acknowledging that it is a misnomer, as: "voluntary temporary migrants, mostly from affluent countries […]." (6) He categorized expatriates as: 1) those that have business or private entrepreneurial interests/roles, 2) those who are assigned to diplomatic, government, military, development or religious missions, 3) those with teaching, research and cultural objectives (including academics, scientists and artists), and/or 4) those interested in leisure, retirement, 'opting out', etc. So Cohen's (1977) typology fails to account for, and thus reproduces the invisibility of accompanying spouses and children as expatriate subjects and neglects the fact that social and occupational positions change and even overlap in time.

travelers, even those who are engaged in regular 'business trips', are not compelled to find the full range of resources necessary to ensure their wellbeing and quality of life as they 'settle down' temporarily or for an undetermined period. Although in some rare cases, under the right set of conditions, tourists may decide to 'settle' in a place they originally meant to only visit! One of my respondents explained that he "came here looking for a good time." He added: "After my party rounds in Thailand I came to Vietnam. In Nha Trang, there was nothing, but nice people and beaches […] I saw so much potential, so […] I never went back to the U.S. That was 10 years ago!" (Jayed) This expat stayed, becoming a well-established entrepreneur in the nightclub scene and contributing to the development of a dynamic expat community in Nha Trang.

Expatriates tend to be 'labeled' as 'temporary sojourners' because their mobility is linked to continuous, recurrent and intermittent forms of migration that are either seasonal, sequential, cyclical, circular, or transilient (Maclean Stearman, 1985; Faist, 2000) Though we must also consider the indetermination of unforeseen futures, as a number of expatriates I interviewed did not have specific long term plans to leave or to stay, adopting a "we will see" attitude. My understanding is that their residency in Vietnam depends on the fulfillment of their aspirations and on the twists and turns of their life. Drawing on the testimonies of long-term expats in Vietnam, some clearly intended to stay in Vietnam permanently, while others lacked 'intentionality', embracing a more pragmatic view of their life trajectories.[9]

[9] A more inclusive conception is needed to heed diverse migrant experiences, whereby "[p]ermanent residence may occur as the result or purpose of migration but cannot properly be considered as pertaining to the actual migration process." (Maclean Stearman, 1985: 7)

Respondent testimonies reveal that despite the high turnover rate of expatriates (caused by their transience), expat communities in Vietnam are fairly cohesive within specific regions, notably because their shared experience as 'foreigners in Vietnam' entails being part of a readily identifiable and visible 'minority'. English-speaking Western expatriates in Vietnam (especially those recognizable by virtue of their skin color and/or particular racial/ethnic attributes) may be at the mercy of 'at first glance' judgments by Vietnamese nationals, reiterating their status as 'foreigners' and reifying the constructs that are ascribed to them as part of Vietnam's politico-cultural legacies. On the same token, expatriates might have internalized assumptions and prejudices towards host-country nationals or some aspects of their politico-cultural practices, which might be translated into forms of Othering. As such, expat-Vietnamese encounters are often tainted by stereotypes and incidents that stress expatriates' status as 'outsiders'. In turn, English-speaking expatriates, Westerners particularly, will probably bond through their 'shared experience' and through their 'assumed commonalities', which may revolve around shared cultural values, preferences and worldviews.

The population of expatriates in Vietnam is diversifying from the point of view of national and ethnic/racial origin, but also based on other intersecting *factors of distinction* such as gender, sexual orientation, class, occupation, marital status and family arrangements. For this reason, expatriates negotiate layered forms of belonging within and beyond expat communities. More importantly, *factors of distinction*, which speak to relative social positions and personal/social dispositions, are likely to influence the experience of expatriates, because as they adapt to local structural and cultural

conditions, they are bound to face located challenges. Expatriate adaptation should therefore be understood as subjective processes that emerge from the experience of being, living and working in a national, structural and cultural context that is initially unfamiliar.

Expat studies are a niche subfield of migration studies[10]. So albeit the fact that expat studies are gaining ground in sociology, the theorization of migrant adaptation has been mostly relegated to the problematic of "immigrant integration," "assimilation" and "acculturation" in highly industrialized Western nations. (Berry 1980 and 1997; Kleis, 1981; Schmitter, 1986; Reitz & Sklar, 1997; Faist, 2000; Reitz, 2001 and 2007; Anisef & Lanphier, 2003; Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Hirschman, 2004; Li, 2004b; Balakrishnan et al., 2005; Hardin, 2005; Marger, 2006; Dua, 2007; Grim-Feinberg, 2007; Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Bilodeau et al., 2010) In parallel, important research on expatriates have been carried out in sociology, touching on development workers (Neville 1970; Cosgrove, 1972; Cook, 2005 and 2007), transnational labor (Beaverstock, 1994; Stalker 2000; Leonard 2010a and 2010b), transnational identity (Sell, 2004; Leonard 2008 and 2010b), third culture hybridity (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Moore & Barker, 2012), citizenship (Ong, 1999, 2004 and 2006), global entrepreneurship (Portes et al. 2002), local-global knowledge networks and the expatriate financial elites (Beaverstock, 2002), gendered transnationalism (Chaudhuri, 2004; Cook 2005 and 2007), transnational sexuality (Farrer,

[10] Migration studies have tended to focus prominently on population movements that flow towards, or between, 'rich' developed countries The majority of migrants tend to move from poorer countries to comparatively richer developed nations/regions or from one rich country to another. (Faist, 2000; Djajibc, 2001; Levitt, 2001; Adler & Gielen, 2003; Anisef & Lanphier, 2003; Castles & Miller, 2003; Hirschman, 2004; Ho, 2008; Wickramasekara, 2008; King, 2010) Yet, a small but significant flow of transnationally mobile actors are leaving their rich developed homeland to establish themselves for the short, medium or long-term in developing countries.

2010, 2011; Hemmings, 2007), issues of expatriate segregation and exclusion (Glasze, 2006), etc. Though cross-cultural adaptation remains a peripheral subject in sociology, it is clear that expatriate research as a subfield of sociology and anthropology is inherently intertwined with cultural and cross-cultural relations studies. (Kidder, 1977; Schwartz, 1992, 1994; Stoler 1997a, 1997b, 2002 and 2006; Rodrigues, 1997; Schalk, 1998; Sell, 2004; Waxin, 2004; Chaudhuri, 2004; Yeoh and Willis, 2005; Cook, 2005 and 2007; Van Der Zee et al., 2007; Selmer and Lauring, 2009; Fechter & Walsh 2010; Leonard 2010a, 2010b) Across the social sciences, expat studies also make critical connections between colonial/imperial and postcolonial practices (including forms of Othering and modes of representation), and the continued presence of Westerners in 'old conquered territories'[11]. (Cosgrove, 1972; Stoler 1997a, 1997b, 2002 and 2006; Stahl, 2000; Stalker 2000; Cooke 2003; Cook 2005, 2007; Hemmings, 2007; Leonard 2008, 2010a and 2010b; Loyal, 2009; Fechter & Walsh, 2010; Farrer 2010, 2011)

Increasingly, scholars have taken an interest in the lives and work of privileged Western expatriates settled in developing postcolonial countries (Cohen, 1977; Bourke, 1993; Cooke, 2003; Farrer, 2010, 2011) and it is in this niche that this particular research project fits. Expatriate adaptation along with issues surrounding cross-cultural relations with host-country nationals are now regularly addressed by a growing number of scholars that recognize the interdisciplinary applications of their work. Expatriate studies,

[11] Indeed, there are "several detailed case studies of colonial white communities, at the closing period of the colonial era, e.g. the British and French in Africa […] and the Australians in Papua-New Guinea […]. Of particular interest are the descriptions of the Asian 'hill-stations', the resorts to which the European elite used to retire for recuperation and vacations […] and which later became the centres [sic] of recreation and tourism of the ex-colonial countries […]." (Cohen, 1977:8)

including those that concern Westerners outside the West, hold relevance in a number of fields. Though the bulk of research on expatriate cross-cultural adaptation has been conducted in the field of global business and human resource management[12], and in (social) psychology[13].

A large portion of studies on Westerners who live and work in developing countries and/or postcolonial states revolve around the dynamics of transnationalism and transmigration with a focus on temporary labor migration or hyper-mobility, assuming that these flows are primarily determined by the macro-forces of politico-economic globalization and international development.[14] As such, many accounts fall short of addressing the subjective experiences of expatriates, at least in terms of the way they perceive and deal with some of the challenges of living and working in developing countries.

> Theorists across disciplines have appealed for research on transnationalism and diaspora to be grounded in the everyday practices and lives of individuals (Mitchell, 1997; Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Portes et al., 1999; Lamb, 2002; Ley, 2004; Conradson & Latham, 2005) This is linked to a critique of metaphors associated with cultures of migration (including diaspora, nomads, travel, exile) that have tended towards a vague and all-embracing description of experience, rather than recognizing the diversity, heterogeneity and multiplicity of positions embedded within and across such identities (Brah, 1996; Cresswell 2001; Ahmed et al., 2003). (Walsh, 2006: 269-270)

[12] Naumann, 1992; Harvey, 1995; Gregerson et al., 1996; Stahl, 2000; Shaffer et al., 2001; McNulty & Tharenou, 2004, Harvey et al., 2009; Collings & Scullion 2012; Bonache & Stirpe, 2012; Shaffer et al., 2012

[13] Hays,1971; Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1991; Carver et al., 1989; Berry, 1990, 1997; Guzzo et al., 1994; Janssens, 1995; Thomas, 1996; Berry 1997; Berry & Sam, 1997; Jex et al., 2001; Jehle-Caitcheon, 2003; Haslberger & Brewster, 2008

[14] See for example: Kidder, 1977; Findlay, 1988, 1995; Doucet & Jehn, 1997; Faist, 2000; Robinson & Harris, 2000; Beaverstock, 2002; Castles & Miller, 2003; Minbaeva & Michailova, 2004; Glasze, 2006.

Cross-cultural adaptation and expatriate adjustment should be understood as a complex process that is contingent on positionality and, which is anchored on the subjective negotiation of practice in relation to both, the familiar structural and cultural conditions that have shaped expatriate/migrant identities, and the unfamiliar structural and cultural context of the receiving milieu. Adaptation thus encompasses forms of adjustments geared towards efficient and effective use of one's resources to achieve particular personal, familial, social, and/or professional goals, as well as more in-depth transformations that may stem from a desire to learn and change as a result of both *dépaysement*[15] and cross-cultural contact.

I chose to use Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to examine how adaptation strategies may be deployed to accommodate personal/social dispositions, but also how adjustment practices sometimes also denote a potential shift in mindset, whereby adaptation imperatives confront and challenge dimensions of habitus, resulting (potentially) in self-actualization. Habitus can be conceived as sets of dispositions and propensities, which are attributable to either specific social actors or more generally to a group of individuals who share such commonalities, at least in some key aspects of their identities and character. For the purpose of clarity, Chapter 1 explains how Bourdieu's work is applied in this study and how I seek to enhance the theorization of adaptation by examining the transformative potential of habitus and the part played by reflexivity.

[15] *Dépaysement* is a French term, which refers to 'being out of one's famliar context' notably as a consequence of expatriation or migration experience. It implies that social actors are out of their comfort zone, immersed in a structural and cultural environment that is foreign and more than likely to be perceived, at least at first, as strange and different.

Since Bourdieu tended to focus on the impact of structural forces on the configuration of habitus and on the resulting articulation of practice, important enhancements had to be made in order to consider expatriates' subjectivity and to clarify how factors of distinction (which together are markers of differentiation that point to relative positionality and dispositional propensities) affect subjective adjustment/ adaptation. It is in this respect that this research project stands out as a contribution to expatriate studies. Bourdieu's conceptual and theoretical propositions, although valid and insightful in both migration and cultural studies, were not developed to focus on subjective experiences, nor on the potential/articulation of an engaged and transformative habitus. Bourdieu's work is however seminal in providing the tools to understand how structural and cultural conditions serve as "the rules of the game," thereby orienting the negotiation of social position, constraining/influencing practice and through habituation and socialization, shaping dispositions (through internalization processes). I suggest that this groundwork is pivotal in understanding cross-cultural adaptation, for example: why expats may experience culture shock; why adaptive strategies are so often deployed to accommodate dispositions, or how new and unforeseen situations/encounters can challenge doxa. Yet, because his work is primarily focused on the (re)production and representation of the familiar, notably the conventions that constitute structure, his theoretical and conceptual propositions had to be extrapolated, in order to uncover how social actors contend with the unfamiliar, and in time, with the familiarity of the unfamiliar. It is in this context that I sought to apply Bourdieu's work to the realities of transnational experience. Therefore, my intention is to appropriate key notions of

Bourdieu's theoretical and conceptual propositions, while offering a compelling phenomenological reading.[16] Moreover, a phenomenological emphasis helps refocus the applicability of Bourdieu's contribution on the particular and distinctive ways social actors (in this case expatriates) make sense of their experiences.

While Bourdieu discusses at great lengths what is habitus and how it influences social practice (Bourdieu, 1977[1972], 1977, 1984, 1985, 1990a, 1990b, 2002a) he does not extend himself on how it is formed. Though he does clarify that

> [i]n all cases those who used the word habitus were inspired by a theoretical intention not far removed from mine which was: to get out from under the philosophy of consciousness without doing away with the agent, in its truth of a practical operator of object constructions [and representation]: either as in Hegel, who in the same perspective goes back also to notions such as ethos, and […] *hexis* (the greek equivalent of habitus) expresses the willingness […] to reintroduce the lasting « dispositions » which are constitutive of the « actualized morality » (*Sittlichkeid*) […] or else as in Husserl, where the same concept and related notions such as the one of *Habitualität* mark the effort to move out of the philosophy of consciousness by reintroducing, like Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty who do not use the term, a relationship of ontological complicity with the world; or still as in Mauss, who rediscovers the corporal dimension of *hexis* as a behaviour, deportment, and where it serves to express the systematic functioning of the socialized body. (Bourdieu, 1985: 14)

To understand how habitus is configured and shaped overtime, it is useful to consider socialization in the process by which structural and cultural conditions affect the formation of the self. "To speak of habitus is to assert that the individual, and even the

[16] "The conflation of what may be called, for the sake of convenience, the classical structures of anthropology and the structures of phenomenology, in Bourdieu's work often goes unremarked (Shilling, 2001). This may have something to do with the fact that phenomenological texts present difficulties of comprehension that surpass even those involved in the mastery of the classical concept. Nevertheless, the influence of phenomenology to the development of Bourdieu's position has been emphasized by all leading commentators (Crossley, 2001; Robbins, 1991, 1999; Lane, 2000) and cannot be ignored." (Nash, 2003: 46-47)

personal, the subjective, is social, collective. Habitus is a socialized subjectivity." (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 126) Although I start from the premise that agents' subjectivity is contingent in part, on social positionality and on dispositions (dimensions of the socialized habitus), I firmly hold that socialization is the chief process through which actors learn to negotiate said positionality, and through which their dispositions are developed and concretized.

At the base of my post-structural approach, I hold that socialization encompasses processes of objectivation[17], internalization and externalization. These notions are based on the work of Berger and Luckman (1966 and 2011), which I introduce in more detail in Chapter 1. Like them, I argue that social actors are inevitably socialized within particular sets of institutions; that through this process, they will *objectivate* structural and cultural conditions in particular ways; and that based on their relative social positions within the social institutions they navigate, they will *internalize*, as part of who they are, not only the assumptions that inform particular worldviews, but also all the constraints, rules (prescription and proscriptions) and regularities that constitute the habitual practices that make up their everyday lives, even as these change overtime. Socialization shapes habitus. It is in this way that social actors might come to believe that their relative social position entails having to take up specific 'roles' that must be played/performed' within

[17] "Objectivation is the process through which human actions perceived within various contexts of the social world, are understood as objective in terms of their causes and consequences, or in terms of the underlying motivations and relative impacts incurred through chains of actions and reactions. Objectivation accounts for the (re)actions that substantiate (produce, reproduce or perhaps contest) the structural forces of the externalized institutional world. In other words, the external "institutional world is objectivated human activity, and so is every institution." (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 60) Externalization underscores how social actors apprehend the world, its rules and (ir)regularities and how they re-enact (produce and reproduce) the terms of their understanding. As part of the process of externalization, the subject also "constructs the world into which he externalizes himself. In the process of externalization, he projects his own meanings into reality." (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 104)

but also across institutional settings. *Externalization*, therefore implies that social actors 'put in practice' the modes of being/acting they have assimilated. This is also how prejudices, stereotypes and patterns of Othering are likely to be learned and reproduced, often as uncritical and/or unconscious attitudes born of dispositional propensities, which sometimes become the object of contestations and moral confrontation by actors who come to reject particular beliefs/attitudes as misinformation. So while institutional realities are the products of social actions, they are also conceived as acting on social actors. "The product acts back on the producer. Externalization and objectivation are moments in a continuing dialectical process" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 61). Internalization is the process through which "the objectivated social world is retrojected into consciousness in the course of socialization" (Idem). This is precisely why Bourdieu developed the concept of misrecognition, to account for agents' 'blind spots' and often, the naïve acceptance and 'taking for grantedness' that is at the root of assumptions.

In this sense, objectivation, internalization and externalization are intrinsically subjective, constituting the processes by which social actors construct and experience their social realities in ways that are 'located' and 'personalized'. In turn, this leads to the embodiment and negotiation of perceived differences and similarities, which emanate from the social positions they occupy, take-up and are ascribed in various fields of practice/relation. As such, social positionality can be understood as the relatively (un/sub)conscious negotiation of multiple *factors of distinction* or markers of differentiation in relation to the structural and cultural conditions afforded in a given environment; while habitus can be conceived as the product of socialization in a particular social

environment, within particular fields and in their intersections. As such, habitus may well be confronted by the experience of dépaysement: having to negotiate one's positionality in unfamiliar and foreign structural and cultural settings, and having to make adjustments in order to accommodate dimensions of habitus, or having to face conditions that might confront the habitus in ways that could prompt the evolution, or a reevaluation, of beliefs, values, attitudes and predilections.

Bourdieu also uses the concept of *distinction* in reference to class differentiation, and to practices that reify such *différence*; though it is used here, to refer more expansively to the negotiated positionality of expatriates in Vietnam and the constructs that render differentiations substantive. The concept of *factors of distinction* is therefore mobilized to speak of intersecting axes of difference, such as class, ethnicity/race, national origins, gender, sexual orientation, marital/relationship status, and family arrangements (with a focus on parenting). As such I acknowledge the core influence of structural and cultural conditions in forming (at least in part) the 'subjective self', which is often articulated in relation to objectivated "categories of being" (roles, performative representation, projection, essentialist stereotyping, etc.); though I also heed the constructivist notion that personal and social experiences are contingent on agency and other subjective processes which speak to personalized experiences in the construction of such social realities.[18] These subjective processes may thus relate to perception,

[18] Bourdieu's conceptualization aknowledges both the impact of field structures on habitus and the habitus' construction and reproduction of the structure of the field. "The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways. On one side, it is a relation of *conditioning*: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of a field (or of a set of intersecting fields, the extent of their intersection or discrepancy being at the root of a divided or even torn habitus). On the other side, it

interpretation, emotional sensibilities, the configuration of understanding (cognition/apprehension), including reflexive practices, the deployment of forms of capital, etc. As such, and despite the fact that social actors may accept certain structural and cultural conditions as 'givens', it becomes clear that social actors can also negate, reject, and reformulate the terms of their own intersubjective engagements, and develop forms of self and social awareness that may confront and challenge the constraints imposed by structural and cultural conditions. The experiences of expatriates in Vietnam are therefore conceptualized as emanating from both: the effects of structural and cultural conditions (past and present) on the formation of the self, on one hand, and the implications of subjective processes, which also modulate one's apprehension of the world and the articulation of the self in different contexts, on the other hand. Comprehensive considerations on social positionality and patterns of practices help support a more fundamental discussion on adaptation, that is how certain forms of adjustment are geared towards habitus maintenance (or reproduction), or whether and how adaptation might, sometimes, challenge dispositions and lead to substantial reformulations of habitus (or dimensions of habitus) and identity correlates.

As such, it is relevant to ask: how are expatriates experiencing *dépaysement* in the Vietnamese receiving context? How does the configuration of expat communities in Vietnam affect the personal and located experiences of Western expatriates specifically? How do gender, ethnicity/race, and class, among other factors of distinction affect expatriates' experiences? And how do personal, social and familial priorities affect the

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is a relation of knowledge and cognitive construction. Habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense and value […]." (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127)

adaptation process as expats/migrants contend with foreign or unfamiliar structural and cultural conditions?

> The cultural differences encountered by [migrants] in the adopted countries […] pose a challenge to the preservation of the migrants' old […] identities and their ability to adapt to the new cultural environment. The "in-betweenness" or liminal state of processual migration in a transnational situation, […] underscores the migrants' volatile migratory experiences that defy a traditional culturalist approach that tends to characterize identity formation process as one that follows a linear and uniform pattern of tribalism. There are, nevertheless, certain emotional manifestations specific to human beings such as grief and anguish that transcend specific cultures (Ewing 2005). By investigating the migratory experiences of immigrants at the interface of cultures, sociologists are able to explore the emotional and behavioral implications of migrants who experience frequent border-crossings. (Chan & Chan Wai-Wan, 2010: 399)

A focus on expatriates' subjectivity validates the claim that migrants' adaptation and identity (trans)formation processes are highly contingent on the way social actors negotiate their relative social positions and dispositions in the receiving context.

Taking their subjective experience into consideration, we may ask: how do they mobilize various forms of capital in order to facilitate their adaptation to local structural and cultural conditions? How are they personally affected by the hurdles they face? And does expatriation represents an opportunity for self-transformation and the reassessment of what they may have taken for granted in their homeland? From a social psychology perspective, adaptability is a quintessential feature of identity formation.

> Plasticity –the ability to learn and change through new experiences –is […the] very basis upon which individuals acquire a cultural identity. Born into this world knowing literally nothing of what is needed to function acceptably in a given society, and through continuous interaction with various aspects of the cultural [information field…], adaptive human minds undergo a progression of changes, in each of which some of the

> new concepts, attitudes, and behaviors are "programmed" into them forming a sense of identity. (Kim, 1994: 9)

This 'programming' refers to internalization, which is intrinsically (inter)subjective and which substantiates habitus.

From a conceptual standpoint then, I propose to define cross-cultural adjustment/ adaptation in relation to habitus, positionality, practice and reflexivity. Cross-cultural adjustment/adaptation have been defined differently by a number of scholars (Lazarus, 1976; Church, 1982; Black, 1988; Hurh and Kim, 1990; Berry, 1997; Du-Babcock, 2000; Yang et al. 2005) In general, "researchers use 'cross-cultural adjustment' or 'cross-cultural adaptation' when sojourners are living or working overseas, to describe the process of change in their behaviour [sic] in order to function properly in the new environment." (Liao, 2010: 18) However, for the purpose of this study, this definition underscores important ambiguities, notably as it relates to the notion of "behavioral change"[19] and in terms of the epistemic assumptions implied in "to function properly."[20] Conversely, Kim (1988) proposes that cross-cultural adaptation be defined as "the process of change *over time* that takes place *within individuals* who have completed their *primary socialization* process in one culture and then come *into continuous, prolonged first-hand contact* with a new and *unfamiliar culture*" (Kim, 1988: 37-38 [Emphasis

[19] The notion of behavioral change is inscribed in a branch of psychology, which is incoherent with the approach I am proposing here; thus, partly because its tenets are contrary to principles of reflexivity, and also, because it does not critically assess the subjective relation between practice and habitus. For example, a new practice may in fact be used/deployed in order to accommodate habitus and therefore avoid the need to re-evaluate doxa. So even if there is an adjustment in technical terms, habitus remains unscathed. This definition does not differentiate forms of adaptation in terms of its relation to identity.

[20] "To function properly" is a notion which is laden in the fundamental assumptions that fall in line with instrumental and utilitarian notions of efficacy and effectiveness. It whitewashes the subjective dimension of experience and reduces adjustment/adaptation to a practical operation ostensibly analogous to a mechanical process.

added]) When the unfamiliar becomes familiar however, when practices and ways of being/thinking that once required effort become second nature, the extent and depth of adjustment/adaptation passes from the situational, temporary and convenient to the sustained and habituated. As such, I define cross-cultural adjustment/adaptation as complementary sets of subjective processes:

1) *as sets of practices (forms of expression, representation, projection, (re)enactments, negotiation, or lack there of), which may entail modifications in the way a person acts, reacts and thinks, as a response to his/her positionality and one's interactions with elements of an (initially) unfamiliar and foreign structural and cultural context, and which are usually deployed in order to carry out specific tasks, fulfill desires and needs, achieve specific goals, raise satisfaction, reduce stressors and/or enhance quality of life – in various fields of social life (at work, with the family, at home, with friends, in public settings, etc.);*
2) and sometimes also, as *progressive but sustained shifts in attitudes, a re-evaluation of doxic knowledge/assumptions, an evolution in dispositional characteristics (preferences, mannerisms, motivations, underlying assumptions, beliefs and values) along with the development of new forms of awareness that are spurred by recursive and reflexive practices, a process of re-socialization, in the context of successive, or medium- to long-term experiences of dépaysement in (initially) foreign or unfamiliar structural and cultural environments, and which results in deeper identity (trans)formation and self-actualization.*

I use the terms adjustment and adaptation interchangeably, because their entanglement is inevitable and their disentanglement, messy. It is a distinction that does not need to be made here.

We cannot assume that differences in social position and in personal/social dispositions have a benign or insignificant influence on the subjective experiences of expatriates. Rather, relative social positions, conceptualized and operationalized as *factors of distinction*, may have profound effects on the perception of challenges, on the apprehension of cross-cultural encounters, and on the deployment of adaptation strategies. It is useful here to conceptualize *dispositions* as dimensions of habitus, which are internalized in part, as by-products of the practices and frames of reference that correspond to specific roles and social positions held/negotiated over time. I explain further in Chapter 1, the relevance of Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical and conceptual proposition and how it is applied and enhanced within the context of this research.

As such, I suggest that the subjective experiences of expatriates is likely to be colored by factors of distinction, such as gender, race/ethnicity, class, nationality, sexual orientation, marital status and parenting roles, and by the correlate (pre)dispositions that inform practice.

In the context of this study on English speaking expatriates, these core concepts and ideas drive three sets of questions:

- How do *factors of distinction* relate to relative social position and disposition, and do these substantiate the articulation of *subjective experiences?* How are expatriates affected by their relative social position and internalized dispositions, considering the

contingencies afforded by various factors of distinction, such as national origins, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and sexual practices, marital status and family life-stages (as well as parenting roles), among others?

- How do expatriates perceive the challenges they encounter in Vietnam, and what *adaptation strategies* do they rely on in order to contend with the structural and cultural conditions of their receiving context. How are the relative social positions of expatriate respondents, their dispositions and the sets of practices they engage in, involved in their adaptation process? How are expatriates advantaged or disadvantaged by their relative social positions or dispositions? How are expatriates' practices in various fields negotiated around contextual adaptation imperatives?
- Can long-term expatriation or successive expatriations prompt forms of adaptation that have a significant impact on *dimensions of identity*? Can cross-cultural adjustment lead to substantive transformations in the articulation of the self? Can expatriation and cross-cultural contact serve as a catalyst in the reconfiguration of personal and social dispositions?

For this project, I added survey research and frequency analysis to complement my qualitative approach, which included participant observation (and observant participation)[21], semi-structured interviews and thematic focus groups. I also conducted a content and literature review of blogs and online forums relating to life in Vietnam. As a complementary strategy meant to enhance my qualitative approach, survey results

[21] In combination with conventional participant observation, I also used 'observant participation' as a data gathering strategy. This is a variation of the conventional format of 'participant observation'. (Kaminski, 2004)

allowed me to identify key factors of distinction and sets of practices, which are involved in the adaptation process, and which are not always 'noticeable' through participant observation in public/social settings[22]. Considering the lack of reliable information on expatriates in Vietnam, the survey was a worthwhile endeavor because it produced a portrait of the English-speaking expatriate community, while also providing data on expatriates' social position markers within that community and in relation to the Vietnamese receiving context more generally. The survey covered key factors of distinction such as parental origins, nationality, race/ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital/relationship status, family/parenting arrangements, etc., as well as information on past experiences and sets of practices[23].

Covering these various elements in the survey allowed me to produce a portrait of the expatriate community in Vietnam while clarifying the relative coordinates of expatriates' social positionality within it and in relation to other expats. It is important to clarify here that the identification of factors of distinction reflects primarily the need to establish indicators of intersubjective differences, denoting the probable contours of relative positionality and dispositions, and therefore experience. The use of categories related to race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, marital/relationship status and family/parenting arrangements, among others, is not meant as an admission to an objective reality that supersedes subjective experiences. Rather, it is crucial to understand

[22] For example, these include sexual orientation, relationship/marital status, family priorities, the frequency of contact with friends and family abroad, the importance of social networking, or the use of domestic employees at home, Vietnamese language proficiency, among others.

[23] (past countries of residence, international mobility, reliance on domestic employees at home, dating preferences, connectedness with family/friends overseas, use of social networking and IT in transnational relations, etc.)

that throughout my work, I strive to show how social actors internalize these constructed categories as seemingly objective realities and often, as self-defining characteristics; though this does not preclude their ability to negotiate (ostensibly accept, reject, modulate and reformulate) the terms of their personal and social identities in relation to, but also at the interstices of these categories.

The survey's open-ended questions also produced summary insights on the adaptive challenges expatriates perceive and experience. In turn, the information gathered through the survey allowed me to choose interview respondents strategically based on their relative social position and practices, and to devote interview time as well as focus group sessions to more in-depth questions relating to the articulation of 'located' personal and intersubjective experiences, including underlying perceptions, emotional sensibilities and reflexive practices of identity construction. In other words, while I used the survey to 'locate' expats within the expat community, and to identify potential interview respondents on the basis of variability and diversity criteria, it also represented an important economy of time, given that basic questions on social position and practices had already been covered. So with each interview, I already had substantial information on chosen respondents. This allowed me to focus the interview questions and target key aspects of their experiences. Essentially, the survey had an exploratory purpose: to identify a wide range of factors of distinction, going beyond common considerations on class, race/ethnicity and gender, thereby including nationality and origins, relationship/marital status, sexual orientation, family/parenting arrangements, among

others.[24] Thanks to the breadth of survey results, I was able to focus the interviews, pick the themes of the focus group sessions, and narrow the analysis to cover key issues relating to gender, sexual orientation, relationship/marital status, and parenting priorities, which emerged as negotiated social realities with deep implications on the adaptation process.

With these and other *factors of distinction* in mind, it is important to note that respondents often articulated their social positions as roles and as dimensions of their embodied identities, and that they also used 'categories' to describe their experiences with various Others. This stands in sharp contrast to the way I aim to take up the notion of intersubjective differences, as socially constructed and negotiated. Therefore tensions arise on two fronts: 1) the need to operationalize aspects of interpersonal differences in the survey creates a convenient but controversial use of categories, which is meant to reveal markers of positionality and dispositional propensities, but which unfortunately could be read as a potentially universalist or essentialist pretense on the relevance of such categories; and 2) the use of generalizing and essentializing categories by my respondents (in their testimonies about themselves and Others) and in mainstream content (news articles, expat guide books, blogs, forums, etc.) seems to convey a positivistic view and absolutist undertones, which serves to uncritically reify social positionality. The fact that none of my respondents articulated their own positionality in radical terms points to the

[24] Survey results also helped identify other important factors of distinction (such as age, education, work titles, sectors of occupation, and managerial roles/responsibilities) that could be linked to specific adaptative challenges. These analytical directions were dropped in favor of a more coherent focus on the affective dimension of personal challenges experienced in relation to intimate relationships, family dynamics and identity negotiations, as identified by survey respondents in open-ended questions. Future publication projects will revisit some of the themes that were omitted in this thesis, but for which sufficient data was also gathered, notably in the area of cross-cultural work relations and power dynamics.

relevance of the objectivist discourse and mode of representation as a limiting and limited articulation of the self in relation to Others and the world; thus, even when my respondents explicitly asserted their desire not to generalize about various Others, they conveyed judgments or opinions that fell in line with conventional forms of differentiation. It is therefore crucial not to confound the ontological premise of post-structural theorization and the ontological conjectures made possible by the combined use of positivist/objectivist terminology (as common practices of representation) on one hand, and the subjectivist dimension of experience which is conceptualized and theorized following qualitative interpretive analysis, on the other hand.

The survey was designed for the specific purpose of this research project, and results were compiled for N=300 respondents (150 men and 150 women). The survey asked respondents if they would be willing to participate in an interview, and from those who agreed, 39 were selected based on the diversity of their social positions, practices and experiences. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand how relative positionality and dispositions influence expatriate adaptation, and how their experiences are embedded in personal perceptions and interpretations, reflecting varied forms and depths of self and social awareness. Semi-structured interviews were crucial in developing more in-depth insights into respondents' introspective reflexivity as it pertained to their adjustment overseas and cross-cultural adaptation, but also to the evolution of their self-concept overtime. Personal narratives were essential in linking expatriate adaptation to self-actualization and identity (trans)formations. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed along with my hand-written notes in NVIVO, accounting

for content, intonations and body language (non-verbal cues). Transcripts were coded and subject nodes and clusters were created in order to guide the analysis.

Then, based on survey results, I organized 3 thematic focus group sessions, touching on themes that stood out from expatriates open-ended responses: the dating scene and sexual dynamics, nationality and racial/ethnic differentiation, and adjustment priorities for parents (versus those without dependent children). Participants were strategically chosen to highlight differences and similarities between expatriates, thus to allow contrasting experiences to emerge from their exchange. These sessions allowed participants to express themselves not only in terms of their singular experiences, but also to react to others' testimonies, providing a comparative basis for their located perceptions. Intersubjective dynamics within these focus groups revealed tensions and interpersonal strains born of mutual misunderstanding. Focus group sessions were structured by sets of questions, which were used to direct the flow of exchanges. They were held in a private home setting and lasted anywhere from two and a half hours to four hours. Focus group sessions were filmed and then later transcribed and coded in NVIVO, accounting for content, intonations and body language.

In addition, I conducted 262 hours of participant-observation in various contexts, such as expatriates' common meeting places, bars and coffee shop (many owned by expatriates), charity and fund raising events, national celebrations, foreign cultural centers, etc. Information gathered through structured participant-observation sessions was hand-written in a journal and sometimes recorded (when appropriate) using a voice recorder, and then transcribed and coded into NVIVO. The information gathered during

these sessions is integrated as a crucial descriptive component within the analysis. I also relied on observant participation as a key data gathering strategy. Like Kaminski (2004)

> I define this particular research role, in contrast to participant observation, with two conditions: (a) [the] OP enters a community through a similar social process as its other members and is subject to similar rules; and (b) [the] OP undertakes field research as if he or she was a researcher. An ideal OP lives through his/her social role, impassively registers randomly generated personal experience, and applies available data gathering techniques. (7 [original author's emphasis])

Participant observation implies that the researcher is merely observing participants, while 'being' an observing participant implies feeling and sharing the same set of experiences as others under study. It relies on a deep understanding of the subjective character of living and working as an expatriate in Vietnam. This is key in clarifying my own position as a researcher and expatriate. While I took much care to remain at arms length of the expatriate community, nurturing relations with Vietnamese nationals mostly, I could not avoid acknowledging some of the affinities I shared with other expatriates, notably through the numerous exchanges and contacts I had with my research subjects, many of whom became friends overtime. While I sought to cultivate a certain distance vis-à-vis my respondents, to allow for a less biased interpretation of their experience, it is precisely the proximity and affinities, and the experiences we came to share, which provided the basis for more in-depth understanding and questioning. Being born in Thailand of a Canadian mother and a French father, spending the first years of my life in the Philippines, growing up with adopted siblings from Thailand and the Philippines, being cared for by a Filipina nanny for over ten years, and having visited and lived in many countries throughout my life, served to spark my interest in transnational social life,

notably my questions about the multilateral relation between cultural identity, cross-cultural exposure and adaptation. Though it is my sociological training that sensitized me most to the importance of understanding both the broader implications of politico-cultural histories and the inherent tensions that emerge from power dynamics in international and cross-cultural relations. This is why I chose to dedicate Chapter 2 to Vietnam's politico-cultural transitions, to succinctly highlight the relevance of colonial antecedents and modern economic and social change when discussing Western presence in the country, and to explain why Vietnam constitutes a unique receiving context for Western expats.

As a starting point, it is critical to link expatriation to its colonial roots.[25] (Dutot, 1840) Indeed, it can be argued that the colonial era marks the advent of contemporary forms of transnationalism, involving sustained transnational practices such as the maintenance of connections with a homeland through correspondence, diplomacy, travel and trade, remittance transfers, the transplantation of institutional systems, the transposition and reproduction of cultural norms, values, beliefs and traditions abroad, and the diffusion of patriotic sentiment beyond geopolitical borders.

With decolonization and the hard fought independence of colonies, "[w]e know that empire families and individuals often came home, but many did not, physically or emotionally. British historians have perhaps been too coy overall in exploring the history and character of the post−colonial British diaspora." (Bickers, 2010: 10) In *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the seas*, Bicker (2010) and other contributors acknowledge the

[25] As a pledge made to the Emperor of Brazil in the name of the King of France, Dutot (1840) explains the the economic, political and moral functions of expatriation to encourage Brazilian authorities to accept French expatriates who could then help develop industry and exploit local resources, while assuring the authority of a European crown and encouraging the civilizing (religious conversion) of indigenous peoples.

persistence of expatriate communities in postcolonial countries and their diversification in terms of demographic constitution over time. In fact, there is a need to demonstrate such historical continuities and interrogate the post- and/or neo-colonial[26] character of expatriate 'presence' and 'practices' outside the West; notably since

> the quantity and quality of knowledge about the lives of European colonials and settlers can be held in stark contrast with the relative scarcity of studies of those who might be regarded as their modern-day equivalents: contemporary 'expatriates', or citizens of 'Western' nation-states who are involved in temporary migration processes to destinations outside 'the West'. (Fechter & Walsh, 2010: 1197)

To establish such continuities, Chapter 2 proposes a succinct history of Vietnam, highlighting instances of conflict and collaboration, along with complex cross-cultural interplays and encounters. The legacies of Vietnam's international affairs set the stage for its renewed openness to the world, making it a unique receiving context for a growing number of expatriates from all over the world, including ethnic Vietnamese whose diasporic roots are impelling them to come home.

Western Viet Kieu who have 'returned' or come to Vietnam to establish themselves are included in this study. While the Vietnamese government is calling on them to return to their homeland to contribute to economic development, Viet Kieu who return to Vietnam are still considered outsiders despite their 'special' *sui generis* rights (such as being dispensed with visa and work permit requirements). Viet Kieu who have returned to Vietnam with a foreign citizenship after many years abroad, as well as born-

[26] I use the term 'neo-colonial' throughout this thesis, to refer to current sets of practices and modes of cross-cultural interaction that speak to the residual continuities of colonialism, and to draw on similarities between 'old' colonial practices of domination and exploitation, and specific forms of praxis (behaviors, atittudes, prejudices, customs, conventions) that reproduce patterns of boundary maintenance -as evidenced by research data and through expatriates' testimonies.

overseas Viet Kieu who choose to settle in the land of their ancestors are included in this research, because they are an important subgroup within English-speaking expat communities in Vietnam.

In Chapter 3, I discuss how Viet Kieu are in a particular social position as expats, notably by virtue of the Western and Vietnamese cultural capital[27] they may be able to deploy. Although they may be less conspicuous in public settings thanks to their 'Vietnamese ethnicity', research results suggest that they might be disadvantaged and singled out in particular ways, confirming that race/ethnicity plays a role in differentiating the experiences of expats. In any case, the positionality of Viet Kieu seems to entail complex negotiations pertaining to their relative status as 'insider'/'outsider' in relation to both Western expat subcultures and Vietnamese culture. In chapter 3 and beyond, additional considerations on race/ethnicity and skin color also support the claim that they serve as markers of differentiation for expats in Vietnam.

Considering the growing diversity of expatriate communities, I also propose to examine the distribution of my sample in terms of nationality and origins and delve in greater detail into issues of cohesion/division, and inclusion/exclusion. As I explain further in Chapter 3, key national cohorts within expatriate communities contribute more than others to the emergence and (re)production of particular 'expat subcultures' within the host society. As a case in point, the French colonial legacy, and the Russian influence of Cold War yesteryears are now being diluted by the diversification of expat inflows,

[27] "Cultural capital, for Bourdieu, describes such things as socially valued knowledges, tastes, dispositions, styles, and other acquired and inherited social and physical characteristics. These material and symbolic goods are constituted as having value within the limits of specific social fields that possess a market-like structure, such that individuals and groups compete within them to accumulate and deploy species of capital." (Carruthers, 2002: 427)

and the growing predominance of the English language as a practical communication choice, as the language of business globally, and as the language of sociability within the expatriate community in Vietnam. Yet, while the common experience of 'being foreign' has a bonding effect amongst expats, collective differences may also substantiate internal divisions that create exclusive dynamics between/within expat cohorts, thereby perturbing overall cohesion, as is the case for French-speaking Canadians in Vietnam.

Finally, Chapter 3 also touches on some key practices related to expatriate transnational social life, not only within expat communities in Vietnam, but also beyond them, in the receiving society, and globally. Expatriates' connectivity with family and friends overseas is a practice that remains under-researched, despite representing a crucial dimension of adaptation. The maintenance of transnational bonds is not only a way to nurture important relationships with loved-ones and cultivate core values and practices, it is also a way to ensure a certain continuity in positionality and therefore a way to foster some sense of the familiar, despite the experience of dépaysement. With this in mind, survey results as well as testimonies drawn from the survey's open-ended questions reveal the importance of such practices as expatriate adaptive strategies.

It is clear that expatriates today cannot be pigeonholed as a specific category of workers sent abroad by a company or a state agency for a set mandate. Rather, expatriates are known to represent a wide range of social actors from students to retirees, and evidence suggests that social status along with adaptation imperatives may be negotiated primarily, on the basis of overlapping factors of distinction such gender, class, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital/relationship status, and parenting concerns. To

explain how and why Western expatriates' cross-cultural adaptation in Vietnam is a complex process modulated by social positionality and dispositional propensities (dimensions of habitus), Chapters 4 through 6 cover various markers of differentiation (factors of distinction) and the related adaptive experiences of expatriate respondents. For example, Chapter 4 discuses the implications of gender, notably the subjective embodiments of particular roles along with forms of gendered performance, which emerge from dimensions of habitus, and which are articulated specifically in relation to the experience of dislocation, in response to local norms, scripts and expectations, and through encounters with Vietnamese nationals. Narratives offer compelling evidence that gender is a key factor of distinction, producing highly subjective responses to the adaptation imperatives imposed by expatriation and by the structural and cultural conditions of the Vietnamese receiving context.

Chapter 5 delves further into gendered experiences related to sexuality. Survey results reveal important findings that substantiate the need to highlight triangular connections between gendered, marital/spousal status and racial/ethnic positionality, dispositional propensities related to sexual orientation and dating preferences, and intersubjective experiences amongst expats and between them and host country national. Research results drawn from narratives point to the emotionally laden experiences of expatriates as they contend with, and adapt to local sexual dynamics. Particular tensions point to pervasive continuities and recurrent cross-cultural dynamics that are rooted in the cultural politics of postcolonial endogamous and exogamous sexual interplays/ encounters. More importantly, interviews and focus group exchanges reveal how adaptive

challenges related to sexual desires, intimate relations and heteronormativity are subjectively apprehended, and how these experiences are bound up in habitus.

In line with the argument that positionality and habitus are ubiquitous in the process of expatriate adaptation, Chapter 6 takes up issues related to household and parenting priorities. In the case of household management and parenting priorities, class positionality seems to justify expatriates' reliance on domestic help (cooks, cleaners, nannies, drivers, etc.), which in turn serves as strategic adjustments/adaptations that raise expats' standards of living, while allowing them to avoid some of the challenges of cross-cultural habituation. As such, expats can steer clear of stressors generated from the cross-cultural encounters inherent in mundane tasks such as facing traffic, running errands or bartering at markets, notably because limited language proficiency and limited knowledge/familiarity with local ways within the Vietnamese receiving context is experienced as a hurdle. The use of nannies serves also as a generalized strategy for expat parents facing work-family conciliation challenges. The issue at hand then is whether and how these practices recall colonial/imperial dispositions, and why practices of reproduction are deployed with zeal in the fields of the household and the family. In the case of parenting, emotionally charged experiences were observed in various settings and explicitly articulated by respondents, notably regarding some of the anxieties felt in relation to their children's welfare, their relative needs, and perceived limitations in the infrastructural, structural and cultural environment. Cases of cross-cultural dissonance are highlighted in these fields of practice/relations, and their implications on doxa discussed

to theorize the link between relative positionality, dispositional propensities and cross-cultural adaptation.

Finally, Chapter 7 focuses particularly on reflexivity, and how existential motivations may serve as impetus towards forms of adaptation that mark an evolution in the articulation of the self. Adaptation is therefore conceptualized as a more long-term process, which is guided by agents' social and self awareness, their need to make/find meaning out of their experiences as expatriates, and their relative engagement in developing more astute forms of cross-cultural sensitivity. Unlike preceding chapters, which look at adaptation through sets of practices and their entanglements with markers of differentiation (indicators of positionality and dispositions), this chapter emphasizes the importance of life stories in understanding how cross-cultural contact and dépaysement may spur forms of self-actualization. Specific case studies were chosen to illustrate how adaptation, over time, may entail tapping into the transformative potential of habitus, thus incurring modulation in a social actor's sense of self. The case studies presented were selected because of their distinct characteristics, notably the depth of reflexivity in narratives, and the articulation of agency as a key feature of their experience. Interestingly, narratives also denote the implicit connection that exists between dispositions (dimensions of habitus) and identity correlates.

In short, Chapter 1 clarifies the conceptual and theoretical basis of my work. After Chapter 2, which sets the tone for an understanding of the historical legacies of postcolonial and post-embargo Vietnam, discussion chapters (3 to 7) provide detailed analyses of expatriates (inter)subjective experiences, demonstrating how social

positionality and sets of dispositions related to the intricate construction and negotiation of race/ethnicity, nationality, origin, gender, marital/relationship status, sexuality and sexual orientation, household and living standards, family arrangements and parenting produce distinct contingencies in the adaptive process. Research results demonstrate how/why certain forms of adaptation tend to accommodate, rather than confront and test dimensions of habitus; and how/why certain adjustments (in attitudes, practices, ways of thinking/doing/acting) might spur an evolution in dispositional propensities.

Chapter 1

THEORY AND CONCEPTS

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1.1-. Beyond Bourdieu: a transformative habitus for subjective and reflexive agents?

In most simplistic terms perhaps, Bourdieu's work reflects his propensity to foreground the role and influence of structural conditions on the constitution of social actors and on the configuration of their practices. Bourdieu's conceptual and theoretical proposition accounts for the deeply conditioned character of social actors, although he also acknowledges that habitus is a product of socialization, that it is an open system of dispositions, and that it has a generative capacity.[28] A priori, structures shape the habitus because complex processes of conditioning within different fields lead to the internalization of constructs, norms, values, rules and constraints and to the acceptance and adherence to forms of 'the social order' which most social actors come to 'take for granted'. Alternatively, habituses, which are usually engaged in the reproduction of structural/cultural conditions, are also capable of contesting, modulating or even

[28] The notion of habitus was developed by Bourdieu in an effort to reconcile some of the tenets of structuralism and methodological individualism, insofar as he wanted to move away from the notion of 'rule' and heed the relative agency of social actors as well as the range of behaviors that contend with real and perceived social and relational constraints in his analysis of practice. In conceptualizing habitus, Bourdieu was actually focusing on, and theorizing, the relation between structure and practice, and the underlying predispositions that are the 'embodied' product of conditioning. (Bourdieu, 1977) Bourdieu did not focus on 'unpredictable behavior' so the concept of habitus and its theoretical premise does not provide an alternative mode of response, which is outside the frame of the 'conditioned'. For this reason, one of the main criticisms of the concept of habitus, is that it seems to theoretically disallow unconditioned, unpredictable and novel attitudes. (Jary & Jary, 1995: 275)

revolutionizing the structures of fields[29]. (Hillier & Rooksby, 2005; Bourdieu, 2002a) In this sense, Bourdieu concedes of the possibility of radical social change and as a consequence, of the potential for individuals and/or collectives to renew the modalities of their social engagement or practice. In light of intersubjective dynamics, this also suggests that social actors contend with structural shifts through the progressive acceptance, adoption, and integration of new paradigms.

In line with this idea, and following much debate about the transformative capacity of habitus, evidence now confirms that habitus is dynamic and in some situations, capable of drastic reconfigurations. (Hillier & Rooksby, 2005)

> In fact, as history shows, […] under the leadership of those seeking a monopoly over the power to judge and to classify, […] the dominated are able to break out of the grip of the legitimate classification and transform their version of the world by liberating themselves from those internalized limits that are the social categories of perception of the social world. (Bourdieu, 1990b: 180)

Being able to 'brake free from internalized limits' has huge implications for the theorization of adaptation generally and cross-cultural adaptation specifically. This implies that social actors are capable of re-evaluating and perhaps defying their basic assumptions about the world. And it means that personal and/or collective 'revolutionary moments' can occur as an epiphany would.[30] Bourdieu is quoted as saying: habitus "is

[29] In [particular fields] and in the struggles which take place in them, every agent acts according to his position […] and his habitus, [which are] related to his personal history. His actions, words, feelings, deeds, works, and so on, stem from the confrontation between dispositions and positions, which are more often than not mutually adjusted, but may be at odds, discrepant, divergent, even in some sense contradictory. In such cases, as one can observe in history, innovations may appear, when people […] are able to challenge the structure, sometimes to the point of remaking it. (Bourdieu, 2002a: 47)

[30] And we can easily provide examples of people who have radically changed their way of life and values following some sort of epiphany, such as people who undergo a late-life religious conversion, rehabilitated criminals, alcoholics or drug users or those migrants who 'go native' within a host country culture.

durable but not eternal." (Hillier & Rooksby, 2005: 22) So while superficial changes in dimensions of habitus may occur rather easily as a matter of 'ad hoc' necessity (in a receiving context), it may take a particular openness to other ways of thinking/doing/ feeling, a capacity for self-criticism, and a willingness to change, along with prolonged exposure to a different way of life, to truly make a dent into the core of one's habitus –to the point that the identity correlates of 'dispositions' will be affected by long-term attitude shifts.

The 'habitus' is a pivotal concept, in the analysis of expatriates' perceptions and experiences. It serves as a bridge between an analysis of the effect of structural/cultural conditions on social actors, and an analysis of subjective experiences related to social position, knowledge, perception, preferences, introjections, internalized forms of entitlements (or lack thereof), etc.[31] Taking into account the configuration of (pre)dispositions provides an acknowledgement that social actors are deeply conditioned, despite their relative propensity to accept and sometimes even embrace the necessity to change. *Notwithstanding the very real and enduring effects of socialization since infancy and the integrated schemes of systems of normative social expectations/prescriptions, a generic theory of habitus does not account for any prolonged or significant experiences of 'dépaysement' and the necessity to 'adapt' –when moving from one culture to another, from one structural context to the next.*

[31] Essentially, habitus is a "system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor." (Bourdieu, 1977: 72)

As a system of dispositions, habitus is reinforced or modified by experience. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 133) Therefore exposure to social realities that are 'ordinary' and 'seemingly normal' reinforces habitus, while significant and sustained exposure to situations that are 'new', 'foreign', 'different' and 'seemingly unconventional' will/may incur adaptive strategies, some protective, defensive or evasive (to preserve or accommodate habitus), and others that may challenge habitus and provoke changes at the level of distinct dispositions, or at the level of doxa. The premise at the base of my argument is that an agent's propensity to adapt and engage in reflexive practice while living and working in a foreign cultural context, may be a catalyst for the re-formulation and amendment of habitus, thereby explaining why 'culture shock' (which is also manifested consciously) may occur not only upon arrival in a new receiving society, but also upon an agent's return to his/her homeland, pointing to forms of cross-cultural adaptation that fundamentally affect dimensions of habitus. To be precise, Bourdieu conceived of the habitus as a set of

> dispositions [that] generate individual practices, perceptions, and attitudes, but only in the context of a specific situation. That is, the habitus triggers reactions and influences perceptions in the context of a specific field[; though] dispositions are said to be transposable in that they are "capable of generating a multiplicity of practices and perceptions in fields other than those in which they were originally acquired." (Bourdieu 1991, p. 13) (Allen & Anderson, 1994: 72)

More recently, the literature in education and in management studies suggested that habitus has an adaptive function, as it is affected by both continuity and change, including new experiences that involve learning.[32] Conceiving of habitus, not as fixed but

[32] See for example Jarzabkowski, 2002 and Reay, 2004.

as potentially 'changing' or accounting for key periods of 'reconditioning' throughout the life of individuals (especially migrants), pushes Bourdieu theorizing beyond the original conceptualization of habitus. As such, I propose a reading of the habitus as an open system of dispositions that also entails a relative propensity to adapt and transform itself under particular conditions, notably when social actors engage in reflexive practices (entailing introspection and self-criticism).

Bourdieu's theory of practice and the concept of habitus have not been conceived in relation to the possibilities afforded by long-term or sustained *dépaysement* entailing 'culture contact'. As a result, the link between habitus and adaptation may seem ambiguous at first. "Bourdieu's theory, of course, requires that agents acquire through socialization a habitus that is the embodiment of generative social structures, and this is the basis for a specific use of socialization theory (Howson and Inglis, 2001; LiPuma, 1993; Shusterman, 1998)." (Nash, 2003: 44) The very formation of a habitus speaks to continuous and sustained adaptations as we learn and integrate the rules of social fields and appropriate forms of conduct that coincide with our relative positionality within and between these fields. We internalize ways of being/thinking/acting/talking as part of any socialization process. Through their work on socialization and its role on the way social actors produce, reproduce and transform their social realities, Berger and Luckmann (1966 and 2011), emphasized the importance of the social in the formation of human consciousness.[33] For them, a phenomenological reading of the processes involved in

[33] "Berger and Luckmann observed that social institutions appear to have an objective reality of their own as given, self evident aspects of the world. The social world, which is a human product, confronts its producer as an external reality–as something other than a human product. New generations learn about this

socialization points to a three-tiered conceptualization of subjective identity formation, encompassing objectivation, internalization and externalization. "It is important to keep in mind that the objectivity of the institutional world, however massive it may appear to the individual, is a humanly produced, constructed objectivity." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 78) Their approach stands out particularly because it unravels how various forms of knowledge can be mobilized in the construction of social reality, notably in the use of objectivated categories,[34] and in the formation/articulation of the 'self'.[35] It is precisely such an approach that can enhance Bourdieu's conceptual and theoretical proposition, thereby clarifying the interplay between habitus and subjectivity, and the role of knowledge and agency in adaptation.

As students of Alfred Schutz, Berger and Luckmann have emphasized the phenomenological dimension of social actors' interactions with the life world, and such a perspective offers a complementary understanding of habitus (trans)formation. Their work on the *Social Construction of Reality* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) looks at primary and secondary socialization in the formation of various forms of knowledge (including assumptions, maxims, common sense, values, morals, as well as paradigms, and the

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reality through the process of socialization, just as they learn about other things that make up the world they encounter daily." (Wasburn, 2002: 11)

[34] For example: "Human expressivity is capable of objectivation, that is, it manifests itself in products of human activity that are available both to their producers and to other men as elements of a common world. Such objectivations serve as more or less enduring indices of the subjective processes of their producers, allowing their availability to extend beyond the face-to-face situation in which they can be directly apprehended" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 49)

[35] For example: a "body of knowledge is transmitted to the next generation. It is learned as objective truth in the course of socialization and thus internalized as subjective reality. This reality in turn has power to shape the individual. It will produce a specific type of person, […] whose identity and biography [...] have meaning only in a universe constituted by the aforementioned body of knowledge as a whole […] or in part. In other words, no part of the institutionalization of [a practice…] can exist without the particular knowledge that has been socially produced and objectivated with reference to this activity." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 84)

likes). They address the nuanced ways in which social actors contend with various levels or forms of familiarity in different fields of activity/occupation, thereby accounting for the fact that socialization implies the acquisition of knowledge, even though knowledge remains unevenly distributed and subjectively interpreted/grasped. What Berger and Luckmann (1966) call 'knowledge'

> is learned in the course of socialization and […it] mediates the internalization within individual consciousness of the objectivated structures of the social world. Knowledge, in this sense, is at the heart of the fundamental dialectic of society. It 'programmes' the channels in which externalization produces an objective world. It objectifies this world through language and the cognitive apparatus […] to be apprehended as reality. It is internalized again as objectively valid truth in the course of socialization. (Berger and Luckmann: 1966: 83-84)

While Bourdieu's work consistently conceives of social actors as relatively positioned and contextually equipped to make sense of their world; it does not comprehensively address how knowledge and agency fit into the equation of habitus and practice. At that level, Gerrans (2005) argued that Bourdieu's stance on knowledge is limiting, because it tends to overlook the "intellectual capacity for the representation and manipulation of propositional knowledge." (53) The issue then resides in the need to define subjectivity and in the conciliation of knowledge and agency in relation to habitus. The problem inherent in Bourdieu's treatment of knowledge is that

> his conception of knowledge is, in effect, a dispositional one, [… insofar as he associates] knowledge with the socially acquired capacities, propensities or tendencies of an agent to act appropriately in given circumstances […but] the dispositional account of tacit knowledge has some severe difficulties, [which were] first diagnosed by Wittgenstein. (Gerrans, 2005: 54)

Put simply, Bourdieu did not consider that an action, which is compelled by the tacit knowledge[36] of a rule is a manifestation of agency. Though it seems that various forms of knowledge and awareness can be constitutive of agency, if these impel/inform action or inaction, whether through practical forms of reasoning (knowing how), conscious intellectual acquisition (knowing that), (Gerrans, 2005) but also unconscious agency/strategy. (Lizardo, 2011) For their part, Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain that

> [s]ociological interest in questions of "reality" and "knowledge" is thus initially justified by the fact of their relativity. What is "real" to a Tibetan monk may not be "real" to an American businessman. […] It follows that specific agglomerations of "reality" and "knowledge" pertain to specific social contexts […]. The need for a "sociology of knowledge" is thus already given with the observable differences between societies in terms of what is taken for granted as "knowledge" in them. [… Par.] It is our contention, then that the sociology of knowledge must concern itself with whatever passes for "knowledge" […] regardless of the ultimate validity or invalidity (by whatever criteria) of such "knowledge." (2-3)

In this sense, Berger and Luckmann (1966) endorse, as I do, a rather expansive phenomenological reading of what subjective knowledge constitutes, in its objectivated, internalized and externalized forms.

To suit this conceptual clarification, Ortner (2005) proposes a relevant definition of subjectivity that is meant to complement and expand on Bourdieu's work:

> By subjectivity I will always mean a specifically cultural and historical consciousness. In using the word consciousness I do not mean to exclude

[36] "Tacit knowledge is knowledge not consciously possessed by the agent or able to be articulated by her in propositional form but which nevertheless regulates her activities. Bourdieu's account of the concept draws from a philosophical tradition whose 20th century inspiration is Martin Heidegger, [and] which treats tacit knowledge as practical ability or skill, acquired through habituation. The essential contrast is with a conception of knowledge which treats it as something gained and maintained by an intellectual faculty for abstract symbol manipulation. Bourdieu offers a version of tacit understanding as Ryle first put it of knowing how, rather than knowing that. In a famous early work he described it as something 'which exists in a practical state in an agent's practice and not in their consciousness or rather in their discourse' (Bourdieu, 1977: 27)." (Gerrans, 2005: 54)

> various unconscious dynamics as seen, for example, in […] a Bourdieusian habitus. But I do mean that subjectivity is always more than those things […]. At the individual level, I will assume, with Giddens, that actors are always at least partially "knowing subjects," that they have some degree of reflexivity about themselves and their desires, and that they have some "penetration" into the ways in which they are formed by their circumstances. They are, in short, conscious in the conventional psychological sense, something that needs to be emphasized as a complement to, though not a replacement of, Bourdieu's insistence on the inaccessibility to actors of the underlying logic of their practices. (41-42)

If adaptation depends on a 'learning curve' entailing the acquisition of various forms of knowledge and insights that will orient perceptions, interpretations, understandings and practice/action, then this process is also bound to involve reflexivity, insofar as social actors are capable of 'making sense' of their experiences. Moving to a foreign country and living/working for a significant period of time in a cultural context that significantly differs from one's cultural antecedents, may require expats to undergo a process of resocialization in order to become familiar with the structural and cultural conditions, and overcome adaptive challenges as they emerge. In other words, expatriation may entail conditions conducive to a form of secondary socialization, which will affect social actors in different ways, according to their subjective and inter-subjective realities within the host-country culture, and within the context of their transnational trajectories.

The notion of resocialization is pivotal to the conceptualization of a transformative habitus and in the theorization of adaptation, notably as it explains how dispositions may be reconfigured overtime, and why expats, after spending long sojourns overseas, may experience culture shock upon returning to their homeland. To be clear, adaptation can be momentary or on going, as well as relatively conscious or un- or sub-conscious. It can be manifested through practical or convenient behavioral or mindset

adjustments, or by longer-term processes that entail habituation, self-regulation and self-transformation. It is the latter that speaks to a more in-depth (re-)socialization process.

Migrant adaptability has been studied and theorized, and empirical evidence suggests that expatriates who live and work for extended periods in cultural contexts that are significantly different from that of their 'homeland', must undergo a progressive and highly contingent process of resocialization to avoid facing conflicting demands between roles and self-concept (Lee & Larwood, 1983). Confirming the relevance of the habitus in this process, the modalities of adjustments may be bound by personal disposition, even unconscious motivations[37], spurring some "expatriates [to] deliberately seek an accommodation with the host country that does not alienate them from important values in their country of origin." (Lee & Larwood, 1983: 664) However, the very experience of expatriation is also thought to contribute to a process of 'maturation', notably in light of particular psychosocial needs/sensibilities; whereby "expatriation dynamic[s call on the] capacity to move away from […] habitual points of reference (family, friends, company, lifestyle, etc.)." (Cerdin & Dubouloy, 2004: 959) Most theories of adaptation leave

[37] "Unconscious forces are at play in virtually all human endeavors and […] these forces can stifle or stimulate creativity, cooperation, achievement and learning. Unconscious forces can blind us to the most obvious deficiencies of our plans; they can also stimulate the most enterprising and innovative solutions." (Gabriel 2002: 351) It is in this sense that Bourdieu acknowledge the ever-present influence of the unconscious, which is part of habitus, and which inevitably informs practice. "Similarly, Bourdieu's notion of the embodiment of the habitus differs from the characterization of linguistic or cultural competence as a purely cognitive mastery that emanates from somewhere in the head (that is, mind). Habitus is in part a matter of "hexis", of the body itself serving as a locus of cultural content in abbreviated and practical form." (Acciaioli, 1981: 37) Although, over the years, Bourdieu enhances and develops his theory of practice, considering first the role of unconscious coding and decoding, to later account for the articulation and manifestation of tacit knowledge. The latter however "is more consistent with the treatment of 'diffuse' and unconscious pedagogy developed in *The Logic of Practice* (e.g. Bourdieu, 1990) than the rather clunky 'encoding-decoding' model with which Bourdieu begins the essay, and which we have seen constitutes the core contribution of Bourdieu to 'post-cultural' cognitive anthropology." (Lizardo, 2010: 14, [Original emphasis])

'blank' what happens after… once social actors' 'adaptation strategies' no longer require effort, once they have been internalized and become 'automatic' or 'second nature', following a substantial period of 're-socialization' or re-habituation. This is precisely why the concept of habitus is key.

Kim (2008) posits that people who are relocated to a foreign and unfamiliar structural and cultural environment for a significant time period will learn and appropriate

> new cultural practices in wide-ranging areas [of public and private life] including the learning of a new language. Acculturation brings about a development of cognitive complexity, or the structural refinement in an individual's internal information processing ability with respect to the target culture. An equally significant aspect of acculturation is the acquisition of new cultural aesthetic and emotional sensibilities, from a new way of appreciating beauty, fun, joy, as well as despair, anger, and the like. Acculturative learning does not occur randomly or automatically following intercultural contacts and exposures. New cultural elements are not simply added to prior internal conditions. Rather, it is a process over which each individual has a degree of freedom or control, based on his or her predispositions, pre-existing needs and interests. [… Par.] As new learning occurs, deculturation or unlearning of at least some of the old cultural elements has to occur, at least in the sense that new responses are adopted in situations that previously would have evoked old ones. ''No construction [is possible] without destruction,'' in the words of Burke (1974). The act of acquiring something new is the suspending and, over a prolonged period, even losing [… of] old habits at least temporarily. (Kim, 2008: 362-363)

The analysis I present in the following chapters considers adaptation/adjustment generally and cross-cultural adaptation/adjustment more specifically. The concept of habitus, borrowed from Bourdieu and expanded to fit the parameters of this research constitute a central concept that underscores the analysis and theorization of expatriate's subjective experiences as they contend with the structural and cultural conditions of the

Vietnamese receiving context. Though in order to pursue the phenomenological project I set forth, the very concept of reflexivity must also be reviewed and extrapolated.

In the articulation of their subjective experiences, I hope to highlight respondents' reflexive practices, notably those reflections that put in perspective the meanings of their experiences and the implications of expatriation and adaptation on their practices and sense of self. Reflexivity is also an important theme in Bourdieu's work, although he deployed it mainly to speak of epistemology in the production of scientific knowledge. Within the work of Bourdieu, the notion of reflexivity was not mobilized in reference to the epistemic or 'cosmological' bases that give meaning to an actor's everyday life. Rather, in his discussion on reflexive sociology, which is presented in *In Other Words*, Bourdieu (1990b) was invested in theorizing the rules of the 'relative' – as manifestations of 'subjective' existence and the role of the sociologist (or social scientists) in objectivating the content of their scientific observations. According to Bourdieu, sociologists who are engaged in epistemological criticism are able to not only objectivate the effects of social structures and interpret the meanings of societal practices or phenomena, but also to put into question the paradigmatic (methodological and theoretical) parameters of their discipline, while operating within their field of specialization, following and modulating its rules, while producing new instruments and forms of knowledge. Though it may be that meta-analytical moments leading to innovative and original constructs/production/representation are not the sole purview of 'professionals producers of knowledge' working within scientific/technical fields.

Reflexivity in a broader sense is a faculty that is relatively developed in people, from one individual to another. It is a meta-analytical moment/capacity that represents the propensity to 'question the basis of what we think we know', 'why things are the way they are', 'why we do certain things in certain ways' and 'how to best grasp/apprehend/construct the realities before us'. It is an integral part of practice and discourse (social exchange), whether in specialized fields or in everyday life.

> The environments of dialogical reflexivity function as the truth horizon and sustaining matrix of second-order reflective praxes, a dependency which reflection forgets at its peril. Reflection's existential source and temporal matrix is not something controlled or authorized by reflection (this we will see is one of the basic errors of the post-Enlightenment rationalist conception of theory and practice). It is rather the always-already operative world of everyday experiences and quotidian comportment toward the being of things, the rich chaos of everyday language, the contradictory pulses of lived history. Techniques of reflection— whether in the sciences, in ethics, politics, or technological practices— are still historically grounded in practices of self-activity. (Sandywell, 1995: 127)

This is a major step to enhance the work of Bourdieu, notably as it provides a new stance on the subjectivity of reflexivity. Reflexivity is inherently modulated by perceptions, sensations, intuitions, desires, preferences, and experiences, along with personal history, intellectual propensities, and the foundations of a rapport to the social world that is developed since birth and throughout one's life (his)story. Reflexivity is a relative disposition, a dimension of habitus that modulates knowledge and agency. *The inherent difficulty in theorizing subjective reflexivity as part of an adaptive process, is that worldviews are constituted by multiple forms of knowledge, assumptions, and cross-cutting sensibilities that compete in time and space, from one context to another, and which evolve through direct and incidental exposure to familiar and unfamiliar fields and*

intersecting social relations/exchanges. This is why the analysis of respondent testimonies and narratives is meant to explore inductive inferences, and the possibility of developing a grounded theory of adaptation, which coherently outlines the relationship between habitus and subjectivity, while also accounting for knowledge and agency.

Reflexivity and the analysis of reflexive practice may reveal for instance how and in what circumstances expatriates perceive and interpret instances of cross-cultural dissonances and how such experiences might reify or confront doxa (or forms of doxic knowledge). Bourdieu, (1977 [1972]) in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, presents doxa as 'what is taken for granted' or 'what is considered as self-evident' within the structures and cultures of society. Though in *Distinction,* Bourdieu (1984) develops the concept of doxa to refer to the subconscious internalization, and personal as well as collective apprehension of the social world and of the constraints that are perceived as the 'real' and 'objective' rules/limits of the social order. Doxa can arguably be conceived as one of the roots of dispositions, one of the pillars of habitus. As such, when a respondent engages in dialogical reflexivity as part of the research interviews, elements of doxa are revealed, leading to inferences on the underlying logic of their attitudes.

Whilst problematizing 'doxa' in relation to the process of 'relocation' and 'adaptation' or 're-socialization' overseas, we ought to ponder how the experience of dépaysement influences what can be taken for granted; how social actors start making sense of their unusual circumstances; and, how they learn to decode and recode social relations/encounter. Accordingly, post-structural phenomenology is well suited to render

such highly subjective experiences/processes, notably as it allows for in-depth insight into the epistemic and cosmological universe of expat subjects.

1.2-. Building on Bourdieu: Post structural phenomenology

As noted previously, a core focus of this research is to gather information on markers of differentiation (coordinates of relative social positions, features of dispositional propensities and located patterns of practice) in order to understand the subjective adaptation of expats in Vietnam. Bourdieu's key concepts: social, cultural and other symbolic forms of capital, habitus, doxa,[38] the notion of fields,[39] and his theory of practice, are all relevant to the analysis I put forth. I use the notion of *factors of distinction* to refer to markers of differentiation and to the constructs that substantiate the term of positional and dispositional negotiations within specific fields of practice/relations. As they adapt to life and work in Vietnam, expats will modulate their ways of being/acting/thinking and it is this process that I want to relate to social positions, dispositions and practice.

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[38] When speaking of doxa, Bourdieu referred to "[o]ne of the most important effects of the correspondence between real divisions and practical principles of division, between social structures and mental structures, is undoubtedly the fact that primary experience of the social world is that of doxa, an adherence to relations of order when, because they structure inseparably both the real world and the thought world, are accepted as self-evident. Primary perception of the social world, far from being a simple mechanical reflection, is always an act of cognition involving principles of construction that are external to the constructed objects grasped in its immediacy; but at the same time it is an act of miscognition, implying the most absolute form of recognition of the social order." (Bourdieu, 1984: 471)

[39] Bourdieu's notion of fields corresponds to the real or figurative 'milieu' of social relations and social action. In *Social Structure of the Economy* (2005a) he describes fields as normatively structured by parameters that determine the roles and expectations of agents. In applying his theory to socio-economic examples, he explains how agents (buyers, suppliers, customers, clients, businesses, corporations, etc.) are positioned within as well as between particular market fields based on the forms and volume of capital they have access to (i.e.: financial, cultural, technological, juridical, organizational, commercial, social and symbolic) and on the 'location' of their interests. (Bourdieu, 2005a: 194)

As mentioned previously, Bourdieu was mainly concerned with '*différence*' or *distinction* as a matter of class differentiation, and he used the concept of 'social fraction' to speak of cohorts that shared similar social positions within particular fields. This is how he also heeded gender when analyzing the structure and power dynamics that are embedded in systems of practice within the division of labor. Though he never directly engaged feminist theorizing,

> Bourdieu does explore gender relations in his work: in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and in the *Logic of Practice*, where he focuses on how a structured sexual division of labor generates a sexually differentiated perspective on the world. In *Distinction* he examined the gendering of taste and *Masculine Domination* is devoted to exploring sexual difference. (Skeggs, 2004: 19)

However, Bourdieu's work does not problematize the gendered, sexual, and racial/ethnic embodiments of the habitus, nor their link to identity formation and transformation. At the base, the issue of embodiment is important, especially for feminist theorizing (and in the scholarship on race/ethnicity, sexuality, family, etc.), notably because structural and cultural conditions impose themselves on the body as well as on the psychee, and in this regard, differentiation (based on gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, family arrangements, class and profession) become central to a more nuanced understanding of the relation between habitus, positionality and practice.

> The concept of embodiment […] mediates the antinomic moments of determinism and voluntarism through the positing of a mutual inherence […] of mind and body […]. As [such, …] the body is a dynamic frontier, the body is the threshold through which the subject's lived experience of the world is incorporated and realized […]. A lack of corporeal finality arises from a mutual inherence between psychical interior and corporeal exterior where each is constitutive but not reducible to the other. [This …] suggests, for example, that the ascription of feminine corporeal identity is never straightforward or complete. (McNay, 1999: 98)

It is also in this way that I speak of differentiations notably those that are internalized as part of habitus and as embodied realities. I discuss some of the negotiations of nationhood, class, racial/ethnic, gendered, and sexual habituses, and their interrelated contingencies on adaptation in the following chapters. On one hand, habitus has a pre-reflexive articulation, which does not lends itself easily to 'self-transformation' or 'self-monitoring'. Here, I am speaking of (pre)dispositions that years of experience have encrusted into durable structures within habitus.

Adjustments/Adaptations that speak to the negotiation of gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and family arrangements are inevitably modulated by dimensions of habitus, and therefore identity, as relatively (un/sub)conscious articulations of the intersubjective self engaged in the negotiation of prevailing norms, which are perceived through the filters of distinct sensibilities. In fact, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence refers precisely to the kind of inculcated pressures that are internalized and often accepted as self-evident truths and objective modes/categories of being (hence his concept of misrecognition). Here, I suggest that we consider the gendered/sexual structure of fields' as it is 'grasped' by the social actor, involving both: embodied dimensions of gender and sexuality (among other markers of differentiation), and an agent's situational propensities to 'perform' (i.e. put in practice/exercise) gender and sexual scripts/roles, to ostensibly and often strategically 'play up' or 'play down' certain aspects of their gendered habitus.

Accordingly, gender and sexual performance, like class or racial/ethnic performance, can be conceived as adaptive practices, which are both

momentarily/contextually motivated, and inscribed in modes/categories of being that are subjectively internalized.

> The inscription of a system of sexualized oppositions […] is paralleled in the 'somatization' of these relations within the bodies of insidividuals. Hierarchically gender relations are embedded in bodily hexis, that is [they] … are inculcated upon the body in the naturalized form of gender identity. The living through of bodily hexis leads to doxic forms of perception which permit the 're-engenderization' of all perceived social differences, that is their interpretation in a sexualized dualism. Thus women become implicated within a circular logic where the cultural arbitrary is imposed upon the body in a naturalized form whose cognitive effect (doxa) results in the further naturalization of arbitrary social differences. (McNay, 1999: 100)

This is why I often use the term re-enactment. But given that habitus is conceived as a generative structure (within certain limits), it may also engender "a potentially infinite number of patterns of behaviour [sic], thought, and expression that are both 'relatively unpredictable' but also 'limited in their diversity'." (Idem) As such, differentiations that are based on the internalization of gender, sexual, racial/ethnic, or family related scripts, underscore what Bourdieu called 'Le sens pratique' or the reasonable and learned aspects of behavior/conduct, which is not always/necessarily rational or articulated as conscious agency, but rather as programmed but pragmatically deployed aspects of practice. It is crucial then to acknowledge the intrinsic connection between internalized ways of being/thinking and identity.

> Bourdieu does not deny the possibility of reflexive self-awareness nor the attendant potential for politically motivated change. This possibility for change is immanent to the temporal and indeterminate nature of social praxis. It also arises from the increasingly differentiated nature of society into distinct fields of action. (McNay, 1999: 106)

As such, habitus is also 'open' and subject to modification. This is where reflexivity may prompt new modes of negotiations, which can arguably produce modulations in certain dispositional propensities. McNay warns however that the

> uneven nature of the transformation of gender relations illustrates Bourdieu's claim that the habitus continues to work after the objective conditions of its emergence have been dislodged […]. A Weakness of alternative theories of reflexive transformation is that the emphasis on strategic and conscious processes of self-monitoring overlook certain more enduring, reactive aspects of identity. Other theories of reflexive transformation place much weight on 'biographically significant life choices" while ignoring the unconsidered and automatic, habitual routine of conduct […]. (McNay)

Bourdieu argued that social determination is maximized by unconsciousness, thus potentially challenged by awareness. I suggest that markers of differentiation, which are internalized as fundamental dimension of identity may be less susceptible to radical transformations incurred by cross-cultural adjustment/adaptation. This is because these are so deeply entrenched in doxa, that they are not easily reconsidered and acted upon, unless perhaps a crisis situation or epiphany acts as an impetus for doxic re-evaluation. Though this is not to say that expatriation and resulting adaptations will be of no consequence on the articulation of the self or on some dimension(s) of habitus.

Adjacently, Bourdieu is also considered to scarcely engage the scholarship on race relations,[40] though this is mainly because he rejects the idea that the concept of race

[40] "In sociology or cultural studies – the chief disciplines of most scholars or 'fans' of Bourdieu – students are likely to be more accustomed to the concepts of cultural and social capital than to racism or Algeria and certainly not to postcolonialism. Some of this limited reception is no doubt linked to the fact that a considerable number of works on racism in France, written by Bourdieu and his colleagues, have not been translated into English." (Puwar, 2008)

is descriptive of an objectivated totalizing reality.[41] However, Bourdieu frequently used the term 'class racism' to refer to discrimination based on socio-economic status, but also ethnicity, nationality and skin color.[42] In fact, Bourdieu demonstrated a keen understanding of the use of categories and of their effects on both positionality and disposition, notably in the way he theorized the link between labor and other markers of differentiation such as age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc.[43] (Bourdieu, 1984)

One of the major reservations I hold in regards to Bourdieu's work is that his concepts and theories were developed as an extension of his concern with the structural forces that shape habitus and which often *'seem to determine'* social position, as an 'apparently direct consequence' of predominant forms of symbolic violence. So despite his attempt to frame his intellectual contribution beyond the limits of structural determinism, the shortfall is that his focus on structure generally supersedes and often overshadows phenomenological considerations on how structural and cultural conditions

[41] Bourdieu and Wacquant condemn the internationalization of the scholarship on race, especially the U.S.-centered social construction of a black/white dichotomy, which may be tentatively 'extrapolated' to other context where race relations may not 'fit' into this bipolar dynamic. Although their claims against 'academic American imperialism' is viewed as a valuable critical point; their targeted attack against a specific 'race' scholar (Hanchard and his work on race relations in Brazil) is seen as a misrepresentation. (French, 2000)

[42] "Pierre Bourdieu discusses racism and xenophobia in his analysis on poverty, unemployment and social crisis in France in the beginning of the 1990s. Based on testimonies, he argues that poverty can be the trigger for conflicts between groups of different nationalities or national background such as the French lower class and the Moroccan immigrants in housing projects. His theses on the symbolic power and the logic of cultural practices are useful in understanding the malleability of racism in time, space, class and cultures." (Rocha, 2011: 10)

[43] "The schemes of the habitus, the primary forms of classification, owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will. Orienting practices practically, they embed what some would mistakenly call values in the most automatic gestures or the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body — ways of walking or blowing one's nose, ways of eating or talking — and engage the most fundamental principles of construction and evaluation of the social world, those which most directly express the division of labor (between the classes, the age groups and the sexes) or the division of the work of domination, in divisions between bodies and between relations to the body which borrow more features than one, as if to give them the appearances of naturalness, from the sexual division of labor and the division of sexual labor." (Bourdieu, 1984: 466)

affect social actors subjectively. In fact, Bourdieu's analysis is often misunderstood because of his perceived focus on structure[44].

Bourdieu conceived of agency as inherently limited by structural constraints, and modulated by 'the rules of the game' within particular fields of relations/practice as well as deeply internalized dispositions that extend from the effects of socialization and conditioning. For him, even actions or practices that defy, reject or condemn elements of the structure, or those that criticize 'the rules of the game' or 'the order of things', such as his own involvement in activism and advocacy (public protests), are produced as reactions to the subjective internalization of structural forces, and a located understanding of structural inequalities as forms of symbolic violence. Adjacently, Ortner (2005) suggests that a major problem stemming from the theorization of agency in general is a focus on 'agent's role in (re)producing the structure' –resulting in "a tendency to slight the question of subjectivity, that is, the view of the subject *as existentially complex*, a being who feels and thinks and reflects, who makes and seeks meaning." (Ortner, 2005: 33 [Emphasis added]) Here I want to draw particular attention to the fact that a phenomenological reading of adaptive strategies that goes beyond an analysis of practice,

[44] Throop and Murphy (2002) label Bourdieu's work as 'excessively 'deterministic' for the purpose of cultural anthropology. Bourdieu's early work on the peoples of Kabyle and the Berbers is often categorized as 'structural anthropology', though he always presented his research and reflections as sociological. Throop and Murphy (2002) explicitly 'label' his work as a 'grand theory' (186), a label, which he refuted adamantly in countless publications, but especially and quite clearly in the preface and the introductory Q & A section at the start of his *In Other Words* lectures. (Bourdieu, 1990b) In his response to Throop and Murphy, Bourdieu defends his position and reiterates the credit he attributes to Husserl's and Shutz's phenomenology (Bourdieu, 2002b), stating "It seems to me that I do indeed do justice to Husserl, Schutz and a few more. […Par. …] But I think that the misreading of my ideas is rooted in the fact that the authors forget that, in my intent, the theoretical ideas which they treat in isolation, separately, in and for themselves, are designed to guide empirical research and to solve specific problems of anthropology and sociology . . . […] for which I proposed […] an analysis integrating the subjectivist and objectivist views […]." (Bourdieu, 2002b: 209)

is bound to start from subjective narratives, which sometimes reflect this existential complexity. Existential insights, as expressed in the narratives of my respondents, emerged as a notable theme in the inductive theorization of adaptation and self-actualization, particularly because existential reflexivity binds habitus to consciousness.

Bourdieu's work is obviously on the cusp of macro-structural theory and micro-social action-based theory. At one extreme of the paradigmatic spectrum Marx (conflict theory) and Durkheim (structural functionalism)[45] assumed that structures (or the structural forces of social, political and economic institutions) are determinant of socialization, social position and agency –focusing on macro-level order. At the other extreme, Schutz and Garfinkel[46] assumed that individual and/or group subjectivity is determinant of perception, understanding, cognition and by extension serve as the motivations for social action –focusing on the relativity of micro-level experience and on the 'construction' or 'production, reproduction and transformation' of the social world through agency. Like Weber, with whom Bourdieu shares more theoretical affinities,

[45] "We know that Durkheim is no doubt, together with Marx, the one who expressed the objectivist position in the most consistent manner. "We believe this idea to be fruitful, he wrote (Durkheim 1970, p. 250), that social life must be explained, not by the conception of those who participate in it, but by deep causes which lie outside of consciousness."" (Bourdieu, 1989: 15)

[46] "It is no doubt in the work of Alfred Schutz and of the ethnomethodologists that one would find the purest expression of the subjectivist vision. Thus Schutz (1962, p. 59) embraces the standpoint exactly opposite to Durkheim's: "The observational field of the social scientist- social reality-has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the human beings living, acting, and thinking within it. By a series of common-sense constructs, they have pre-selected and pre-interpreted this world which they experience as the reality of their daily life. It is these thought objects of theirs which determine their behavior by motivating it. The thought objects constructed by the social scientist in order to grasp this social reality have to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thinking of men, living their daily life within their social world. Thus, the constructs of the social sciences are, so to speak, constructs of the second degree, that is, constructs of the constructs made by the actors on the social scene." " (Bourdieu, 1989: 15)

Bourdieu is located between these 'seemingly opposite' paradigmatic orientations[47], simultaneously heeding structural forces as constituting 'the rules of the game'[48] and to some degree, subjective perceptions, but mostly as the extension of 'relative social position' and of the 'dispositions that are part of habitus' – implying an assumption about how normative categories are learned and internalized[49] (rather than contested and rejected) by agents, to understand and locate themselves in 'the order' of the social world. (Bourdieu, 1990b)

He was also critical of this as it affected the relationship he had with his respondents. In this sense, Bourdieu's conventional role of ethnographer underscored certain power dynamics between himself in his work as a researcher, and his respondents and subjects. Bourdieu himself was aware of such dynamics in his work, prompting him to negotiate his personal political position as a postcolonial activist, and his professional position as a researcher.[50] Bourdieu understood the problem of 'scientific objectivation'

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[47] "The opposition is [apparently] total: in the first instance, scientific knowledge can be obtained only by means of a break with primary representations-called "pre- notions" in Durkheim and "ideologies" in Marx-leading to unconscious causes. In the second instance, scientific knowledge is in continuity with common sense knowledge, since it is nothing but a "construct of constructs."" (Bourdieu, 1989: 15)

[48] Although he concedes that referring to the social world as a game is fraught with difficulties. "The image of a game image is doubtless the least inadequate when it comes to talking about social phenomena. Yet it is not without its dangers. Indeed, to talk about a game is to suggest that there is, at the beginning, someone who invents the game, a 'nomothetes' or legislator who has laid down the rules, and established the social contract. What is more serious is the fact that there exist rules of the game, that is, explicit norms more often than not written down, etc.; whereas in reality it's much more complicated. You can use the analogy of the game in order to say that a set of people take part in rule-bound activity, an activity, which without necessarily being the product of obedience to rules, *obeys certain regularities.*" (Bourdieu, 1990b: 64)

[49] "Our perception and our practice, especially our perception of the social world, are guided by practical taxonomies, oppositions between up and down, masculine […] and feminine and the classifications produced by these taxonomies owe their effectiveness to the fact that they are 'practical', […]" (Bourdieu, 1990b: 73) thus allowing social actors to locate themselves in relation to the whole or part of the structure, and to relate to others on the basis of set norms/rules, applicable to the field in which they operate.

[50] It is important to point out that Bourdieu was explicitly critical of colonial practices in Algeria, that he became an outspoken activist against ethnic and class discrimination, and that his role as an ethnographer along with the disciplinary methods of conventional ethnography placed him in a difficult position. The

and the dilemma of ethnographic interpretation, which he sought to remediate through his methodological rigor and a propensity to use multiple methods to gather data and record evidence in various forms (statistics, diagrams, maps, documents, conversations, interviews and photographs). (Puwar, 2009) It is thanks to the wealth of evidence he was able to gather and collate through such methods that he clarified his theory of practice, a contribution that still has a pervasive influence in social sciences, and cultural studies more specifically.

While I also make use of multiple methods, this research is framed by the tenets of post-structural phenomenology, which is well-suited to the narrative analysis I present in the following chapters. My respondents saw me as a peer, an insider within the expat community because like them, I was a foreigner in Vietnam, with an often-convergent understanding of expatriates' experiences. This was an advantage, which allowed my respondents to relate to me on an equal footing, as someone they knew could understand their positionality as foreigners in the receiving context. As a post-structural phenomenologist studying co-expatriates I was much less concerned with such power dynamics with my research subjects, which promoted respondent openness, while allowing me to focus on their subjective perceptions and interpretations, and when consequential, to theorize the link between their positionality and dispositional

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case studies Bourdieu conducted in Algeria and on Algerian communities during the era of colonial pacification had a profound influence on Bourdieu's conception of inequalities and status differences. Yet, like other French thinkers, such as Althusser, Cixous, Sartre, Foucault, Fanon, and Derrida among others, he did not clearly or explicitly theorize colonialism and postcolonialism as a set of structural conditions that underscore dynamics of power that extend all the way to scientific methodology. Although Bourdieu himself never articulated his own position as 'postcolonial', he collaborated with a number of intellectuals who favored this perspective, such as Edward Said, Abdelmalek Sayad and Mouloud Mammeri (Puwar, 2009; Loyal, 2009). Moreover, other contemporary academics have been keen to extrapolate his work for its relevance to their postcolonial critique. (Anderson et al., 2007)

propensities on one hand, and the power dynamics and forms of symbolic violence that sometimes recall Vietnam's colonial and postcolonial legacies on the other. I also argue that post-structural phenomenology lends itself to the use of multiple complementary data gathering methods.[51] Though as a point of departure from Bourdieu, my analysis of the testimonies and narratives I gathered is founded primarily on the tenets of *interpretive sociology*, because it affords a more appropriate emphasis on the phenomenological understanding of participants' experiences.

As the favored approach of Max Weber and Georg Simmel, interpretive sociology (or Verstehen) was developed mainly as an anthropological and sociological method that heeds the significance given to discourse and practice from the point of view of the speaker or actor. While criticisms of this approach focus on the problem of 'interpretation of an Other's culture', I use this approach, not as an outsider in relation to a foreign culture, but rather as an insider in relation to my respondents, as a co-expatriate with converging shared experiences related to the structural and cultural conditions of life and work in Vietnam, thereby reducing the risk of reproducing controversial bias or forms of misrepresentation.

[51] This research draws on 26 months of field work in Vietnam, which included a one-year doctoral research fellowship at Vietnam National University's Center for Asia Pacific Research, a 4 month visiting lectureship at Hanoi University's Faculty of International Studies, and 16 months of freelance work as a television show host for *Expat Living* and *Talk Vietnam*, and as documentary editor and narrator for *Insight Vietnam* and *Vietnam Charms* as part of VTV4's English language programming. In my role as a television documentary editor and narrator at VTV (Vietnam National Television), I often edited the translated scripts of Vietnamese cultural documentaries. These were originally produced for a Vietnamese audience and aired on VTV1, but having been selected to be part of the English programming of VTV4, documentary scripts had to be translated and edited before I recorded the voice-over narration. Often, these documentaries included detailed accounts of national heroes and heroines who were being remembered for their courage and national pride, in their fight against foreign powers.

Until now, few studies have looked at the articulation of experiences as it pertains to the connection between (inter)subjective differences and cross-cultural adaptation.

> A review of the literature reveals that research on expatriates has tended to focus primarily on psychological, organizational, and contextual variables as predictors of an expatriate's experience on an international assignment. One set of variables that has not been explored in much detail is expatriate demographics. […] Understanding the effects these characteristics have on the expatriate experience is important as the pool of expatriate managers grows increasingly diverse, reflecting the changing nature of the workforce and increased global mobility of employees (Inkson, Arthur, Pringle, & Barry, 1997). (Olsen & Martins, 2009: 312)

To go beyond the limitations of demographic conceptualization, I use the term *factors of distinction* for its broader reach, as it serves as a rather expansive reference to the constructs that substantiate differentiations based on class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, marital/relationship status, and family arrangements.[52]

As such, I designed the survey to target a sizeable sample of expatriates living and working in Vietnam, and to provide clues as to their relative positionality, dispositions (and internalized social roles), and practices. By producing the survey in English only, I also meant to target English-speaking expatriates specifically, considering the visibility and prominence of the Western expatriate community in Vietnam. In the survey, factors of distinction serve as a starting point to clarify the relative social position of expats in Vietnamese society, and paint a general portrait of the diversity that exists within the prominent English-speaking expatriate community. *Factors of Distinction' are meant to refer to markers of differentiation for which constructs/scripts related to age, class,*

[52] Although I discuss the intersection of factors of distinction when such examples emerge from respondents' subjective experiences, I do not address intersectionality systematically or as a distinct problematic. (See the work of P. Collins, 1998 and 2000 for example)

gender, sexuality and sexual orientation, marital status, family situation, nationality, ethnicity, parental origins, among others, are internalized as part of habitus.

In order to carry out this research, key ethical considerations were considered and the Faculty of Graduate Studies' Human Participants Review Committee (HPRC) at York University approved of the planned methodological approach. Adult respondents had to agree to the terms laid out in informed consent forms: one for each direct-exchange data gathering approach, namely the survey, semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions. When participant observation sessions took place in private establishments or at specific events, I obtained permission from owners and managers. Anonymity and confidentiality were important concerns, which I sought to ensure. Pseudonyms were given to each respondent and care was exercised in making sure respondents could not be identified by readers. In respondents' narratives, references to specific persons (including children's names), places or distinct time periods were blanked (removed or changed) in order to avoid identification by association. Once all the recorded files were transcribed into NVIVO, recordings (film and audio) were destroyed. Finally, to ensure proper closure after interviews and focus groups, I invited participants to reach me if they wanted or needed a follow-up exchange to alleviate any stress or anxieties related to this study.

For the survey (Appendix A), a sample of 300 respondents was reached providing the basis for the identification of expat subgroups or cohorts, whose subjective experiences differed significantly on the basis of their relative social positions. In light of the breadth of the data generated, to better circumscribe the analysis and offer analytical

depth, emphasis was placed on nationality, ethnicity/race and transnational practices (Chapter 3), gender and local cultural and cross cultural dynamics (Chapter 4), sexual orientation, sexual preferences and marital/relationship status (Chapter 5), as well as class, household and living standards, as well as parenting priorities (Chapter 6). Survey results, which are presented aside from the interpretive analysis of narratives, provide context and help locate expats in relation to the constitution of the expatriate community. I believe this enhances the analysis and interpretation of narratives, providing greater depth of understanding on their subjective experiences.

Survey results are not expressed in terms of 'representativeness' or statistical significance. Having chosen non-probability sampling, confidence intervals and the sampling error could not be calculated. The targeted population for the survey was English-speaking 'current and recent expatriates in Vietnam' –of any nationality, ethnicity, age, etc. Because this target population group is relatively easy to identify but not always easy to reach, two non-probability sampling approaches were used: namely purposive selection and snowball/network sampling. I used a call for participation –either personalized or generic (Appendix B), which I disseminated to specific expatriates first, and also through various expat networks, at expat events and as a result of contacts with institutions/organizations that cater to expatriates.[53] All participants signed a consent

[53] Purposive selection sampling was chosen for the ease of access to eligible respondents, because the expatriate community in Vietnam is 'tight' and relatively cohesive, my presence in Vietnam put me in contact with a large number of expatriates, who were keen to participate in my research. Also, snowball sampling was used to increase sample size. This approach also allowed the survey to reach expatriates that are harder to contact. A generic call for participation (Appendix B) was sent to a wide range of organizations and institutions that work with/for expatriates, including local associations, hobby/leisure clubs, foreign cultural centers, embassies and consulate offices, NGOs, chambers of commerce, transnational corporations, international schools, and language schools, with a focus on Hanoi and Ho Chi

form (Appendix C). Considering the limitations[54] of these sampling methods, greater importance was placed on heterogeneity and ensuring that the sample included respondents from diverse backgrounds, while also meeting key selection criteria[55]. Those who did not meet these criteria were not included in results. In fact, proportionality in sampling was not a primary concern because the key objective was to portray diversity, and to account for the range of differences that modulate the social position and practices of expatriates.

Descriptive and frequency analysis is meant to provide a general description of the sample and provisional insights into expatriates' relative positionality as well as experiential and (inter)subjective diversity. The survey included questions with structured response options such as yes/no choices, fixed answer templates (such as Likert-scales response formats), multiple-choice nominal and ordinal answers, sometimes with additional space allowing respondents to 'specify' in their own words, along with open-ended questions that allowed participants to log short or long answers.

Minh City as target locations. A modified version of the generic call for participation was personalized and sent to specific individuals, because of their expressed or potential interest in participating in the research. The survey was sent out in a Word template format and also, published online on a secure and encrypted site using a hypertext transfer protocol over secure socket layer (HTTPS) to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. After returning the Word questionnaire via email, or at the end of the online survey, respondents were asked to help distribute the call for participation with the attached survey and/or the secure link of the online questionnaire to other 'expats in Vietnam'. Printed 'hard copies' of the survey were produced and distributed upon request only, due to the additional costs of printing and postage, and difficulties in ensuring the timely return of completed questionnaires.

[54] Aside from linguistic accessibility (restrained by the fact that the survey was produced only in English), some of the main limitations of these sampling approaches include voluntarism (the reliance on respondents' willingness to participate in the research) and biases related to social connectivity with other expatriates and expat networks, which emerged from the snowball sampling approach.

[55] Respondents were filtered on the basis of three criteria: be at least 18 years of age; to have a minimum cumulative time in Vietnam of at least one month; to have resided or plan to reside in Vietnam for a time period of at least six months.

It is important to underline the fact that factors of distinction refer broadly to markers of differentiation, which are not meant as "categories of being" and do not signify any kind of endorsement towards a positivist/objectivist view of typological forms of differences. Rather the concept of factors of distinction is used to facilitate a discourse on the conceptualization of differences and similarities, at the level of (inter)subjective dispositions and social position, without foregoing the need to engage with respondents' narratives using phenomenological interpretation analysis. As such, the design of questions in the survey helped produce a portrait of the English-speaking expatriate community and provide insights on the distribution of respondents based on the reconstruction and reification of conventionally institutionalized markers of positionality (in both the Western and Vietnamese contexts). With open-ended questions on their perception of challenges, research participants highlighted how their experiences corresponded to their own struggle to negotiate specific aspects of their positionality. This served as an exploratory strategy to generate a wide breadth of data, and to identify analytical streams that seemed intricately interwoven with identity negotiations.

In turn, 300 valid/eligible respondents (meeting set criteria) completed the survey, thus yielding descriptive (distribution) findings that clarify how factors of distinction may 'divide' the expatriate community into identifiable cohorts with different priorities, social roles and sets of practice.[56] Survey questions were elective, thus allowing respondents to skip questions they did not want to answer or which were irrelevant to them. Therefore N=300 relates to the maximum number of responses received (the total sample), while

[56] Data was compiled and analyzed using SPSS v.17.1.0 for Mac. Responses to open-ended questions were transcribed, then coded and analyzed using N-Vivo qualitative analysis software.

N<300 relates to the number of responses received for specific questions, considering abstentions. The open-ended questions of the survey allowed respondents to succinctly describe some of the challenges they experience as expatriates in Vietnam, in turn, this provided important insights into the role of social position and disposition in the articulation of perceptions and in the apprehension of personal trials and tribulations. In light of these shorter testimonies, I was able to adjust my line of questioning for the semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions.

Bourdieu also used a combination of methods as part of his ethnographic studies, including surveys and questionnaires. His survey-based findings were interpreted through correspondence analysis[57] -using percentages to map out the dispersion of individuals within geometrical models, although he was criticized for the manner in which he manipulated quantitative data. (Silva et al., 2009) As a point of contention, Bourdieu also argued against a purely statistical approach to identify and understand the implications and intersections of differences.

> The particular relations between a dependent variable (such as political opinion [or patterns of practice]) and so-called independent variables such as sex, age and religion, or even educational level, income and occupation tend to mask the complete system of relationships which constitutes the true principle of the specific strength and form of the effect registered in any particular correlation. The most independent of 'independent' variables conceal a whole network of statistical relations, which are

[57] He employed a geometric modeling approach entailing correspondence analysis to "map out" the homologies between the markers of lifestyle (within the fields of practice of social fractions) and the markers of social position (age, father's profession, education level, income, etc.). (Rouanet H. et al. 2000) Bourdieu used graphs extensively to demonstrate the amount and the direction of dispersions or the density of clusters of social actors (individuals as variables) based on their social fraction, producing "subclouds" representative of specific cohorts. As such, "[i]f we understand Bourdieu correctly, habitus […] is a two-fold concept, both individual and collective." (Rouanet et al., 2000: 14)

> present, implicitly, in its relationship with any given opinion or practice. (Bourdieu, 1984: 103)

For Bourdieu, the principal shortcoming of statistical methodology is its inability to render the underlying synchronicities or juxtapositions of demographic variables or 'categories' in locating social actors within the structure of a particular field. Instead, "Bourdieu's multiple method approach (mixed-method, *avante* [sic] *la lettre*) was central to the empirical and theoretical picture he was able to paint (Silva and Edwards 2004)." (Silva et al., 2009: 300)

So in the 'bigger picture' of expatriates' subjective adaptation, the frequency analysis serves mainly to clarify respondents' relative social positions and dispositions, providing basic inferences within the frame of post-structural phenomenology, which supports a qualitative analysis that fleshes out a selection of expatriates' subjective experiences and some of their intersubjective negotiations. Qualitative methods were the central components of this research. These included participant observation as well as observant participation,[58] semi-structured interviews[59] along with thematic focus

[58] Conventionally a "participant observer lacks the sense of real-life pressure participants experience. He is not as affected emotionally by the events as a participant. He lacks experiences that can stimulate one's understanding of insiders' problems." (Kaminski, 2004: 7) As such, I also rely on my own experience, having spent 26 months in Vietnam, to understand and explain the subjective reality of expatriates. The information that I've accumulated within this framework consists in a large volume of notes and journal entries logged between Mai 1st 2008 and April 30th 2010 inclusively.

[59] Voluntary interview respondents were recruited through the survey, which asked participants if they were interested in partaking in a face-to-face or phone interview, or in some cases through purposeful selection, based on demographic and experiential factors. All participants signed or gave verbal (recorded) consent (see consent form in Appendix D) prior to beginning the interview. All interviews were also recorded with consent. An interview guide (Appendix E) helped sustain a coherent direction through a series of open-ended questions, although a fluid dialogue was conducive to having candid conversations. Recordings of interviews were transcribed and coded for an analysis of content using NVIVO Version 7 software.

groups.[60] Each of these knowledge-producing strategies affords a different layer of insight; and together, these methods provide a more in-depth look at the personal and collective experiences of expatriates.[61]

A total of 39 semi-structured interviews were conducted,[62] providing greater depth of understanding on adaptation, not only as a set of practices (the focus of the survey), but rather as a process that mobilizes habitus and forms of reactive reflexivity (I explain how I employ the concept of reflexivity a little further). The benefit of interviews is that they reveal how social actors define and explain their experiences and perceptions. Therefore interviews on adaptation reveal how adaptation requirements are perceived, how and why adaptive behaviors are adopted, and which dispositions are confronted by foreign structural conditions. Moreover, interviews revealed different forms and depths of self-awareness, various degrees of willingness to question personal/social assumptions, and therefore distinct levels of engagement in the process of adaptation. Only in-depth interviews would have allowed such insight into the highly personalized and

[60] Cohorts of five or six persons were invited to participate in one of three focus group sessions (FGS), covering three different themes: FGS1) Singles and the dating scene (5 participants); FGS2) Accompanying expatriate spouses 'with' or 'without' children (6 participants); and FGS3) Ethnicity and nationality: Skin color and skin color differentiation (6 participants). Participants were recruited through purposeful selection, based on the relevance of their experience in relation to the chosen themes, usually following the completion of the survey or the interview. All focus group participants volunteered for the activity and signed a consent form (Appendix F). Focus group sessions took place in Hanoi, in a private home setting. To prepare for each focus group session, key questions and lines of inquiry were identified (Appendix G). Focus groups were filmed to capture non-verbal cues, and avoid voice recognition problems. The footages were then transcribed including notes on non-verbal cues and coded in NVIVO. The footages were then discarded as requested by participants in order to preserve their anonymity and confidentiality.

[61] To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents, pseudonyms are used and identification markers (such as place of work, place of residence, name, gender and school of children, etc.) may have been changed or blanked out.

[62] See Appendices D and E for the Interview consent form and Interview guide.

idiosyncratic experiences of expatriates, whose sojourn in Vietnam is perceived and felt as unique.

In addition, I conducted 262 hours of participant-observation, which provided substantive information about local structural conditions and social as well as cross-cultural dynamics, serving as context for expatriates' experiences. This was a necessary component of the research, involving structured observation sessions in a variety of settings, from popular expat hangout locations (bars, nightclubs, cafes, restaurants, park, touristy areas, etc.) to special expat events (fundraising activities, get-togethers, banquets and parties). I logged my observations, noting the date, start- and end-time, and location/context of the session, in a journal either "in real time" as I observed (when socially appropriate), or as soon as possible afterwards. Sometimes I used a voice recorder to log my observations verbally, or to recount and summarize a conversation I just had with an expatriate. I transcribed my recordings later on into my journal. The information gathered during these sessions establishes the context surrounding the experience of expatriates. They provide rich descriptions that help contextualize the findings that emerge from survey results and respondents' narratives.

Also, to hone-in on key sets of experiences related to factors of distinction, I facilitated 3 thematic focus group sessions.[63] These allowed participants to express themselves not only in terms of their singular experiences and perceptions, but also to react to others' testimonies, and to compare their individual and group experiences in a dialogical way. Since focus groups sessions had a thematic focus and because

[63] See Appendices F and G for the Focus group consent form and Focus group themes and lines of questioning.

participants were chosen for their 'differences' and 'similarities', these sessions were conducive to a comparative examination of the way experiences converge and diverge. Focus group participants were highly invested in sharing and comparing their experiences with the others in the group. The benefit of this approach is that on top of the information shared, observable group dynamics allowed participants to form allegiances and tensions to emerge from exchanges in the confrontation of assumptions, perceptions, and experiences. These allegiances and tensions are key in understanding how and why expatriates 'distinguish themselves' from other expats. Finally, I reviewed content drawn from blogs and online forum discussions relating to life in Vietnam, along with relevant academic research, historical accounts, economic reports, biographical works, and mainstream media outlets, focusing on Vietnam and on expatriates generally, and more specifically on expatriates in Vietnam.

Empirical data drawn from survey results informs frequency and distribution analysis, which is combined with field observations to clarify how and why factors of distinction and expatriates' patterns of practices are indicators of their relative social positions and dispositions. This however, serves mostly as the background of the main analytical focal point. Indeed, greater emphasis is placed on the content of narratives to heed, from a subjectivist angle, the located and personalized experiences of expatriates. Leaning more heavily on a phenomenological approach, I propose to render a deeply enriched analysis of the interaction between social position, dimensions of habitus practice and reflexivity, based on the substance of narratives. It is within this perspective that I conceived of adaptive challenges and strategies as 'highly personalized',

emotionally and cognitively singular, and contextually distinct. In these narratives, we find that despite the hegemonizing and homogenizing effect of structural conditions, expatriates perceptions and experiences are highly contingent; and this carries much conceptual and theoretical significance as it informs a different reading of habitus, and of the notion of relative social position. By expanding Bourdieu's conceptual and theoretical propositions and by heeding the subjective as an added analytical facet, this project aims to move the scholarship on expatriation and adaptation overseas forward.

I produce a 'portrait' of the English-speaking expatriate community in Vietnam, highlighting the configuration of positionalities within the sample group and subgroups using factors of distinction as an operational indicator of conventionally constructed markers of difference. It is within this framework that I refer to 'cohorts' or subgroups of expatriates, based on an understanding of the categories that emanate from objectivated structural/cultural conditions –as a rendering of predominant constructs such as those that are used as typologies for race/ethnicity, sex and gender, sexual orientation, national affiliations, marital/relationship status, family arrangements, etc., and which are internalized as part of the habitus. From a phenomenological vantage point, forthcoming discussions reveal the (inter)subjective realities of expatriates, as they recount and reflect on their perceptions and experiences in Vietnam, as they accept/accommodate, negotiate or perhaps reject the structural/cultural antecedents of their social positions, expected social roles and habitus. Through the substantive and symbolic meanings that are drawn from narratives, reflexive and adaptive practices are revealed, denoting, in some cases, how agency is negotiated in the face of contextual 'adaptation imperatives'.

Chapter 2

VIETNAM AS A RECEIVING CONTEXT

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2.1-. Vietnamese international relations: historical notes[64]

Vietnam faced more than a thousand years of strife against Chinese imperialism between 200 BC and 938 CE. Chinese nationals have since been an important contingent in Vietnam, notable for their cultural influence, economic clout, and long-standing propensity to thrive as a distinct diaspora community.[65] Later, between 1255 and 1285, Vietnam also fought off three Mongol invasions in the north, while facing recurrent confrontations with parts of the Khmer empire, which was being assimilated into Vietnam as part of the nation's Southern expansion. Despite limited contact with Europeans (until the 18th century), the Vietnamese language was Romanized between the

[64] Like Heron (2007), I want to "emphasize that my approach is not deterministic, nevertheless historicized imperial relations shape the world and our subjectivities, so that if we do not understand how we are implicated in the perpetuation of global domination, we are bound to help reproduce it." (22)

[65] According to colonial archives, "[i]mmigrants had been coming from southern China to Vietnamese lands for centuries […], but [the Chinese and Vietnamese] had little in common, and competed vigorously with one another." (Peters, 2009) Lessard (2007), relying on archival research, reveals that a number of "[e]ditorials [published between 1919 and the 1930s] decried the Chinese monopoly on markets, shops, businesses, means of transportation, and credit throughout Cochinchina. This wave of "sinophobia" in Vietnam [was attributed to] the following perceived "problems": Chinese cohesion within their new homelands; the sometimes ambiguous and nebulous status of the Chinese immigrants' citizenship; Chinese capitalism and economic dynamism; and the Chinese diaspora's maintenance of economic ties with China itself. While in certain parts of Southeast Asia these relations were made more complex by the fact of colonialism, in Vietnam itself there was the added historical legacy of intermittent but long periods of Chinese rule and domination." (Lessard, 2007: 171-172)

16th and 17th centuries.[66] Romanization was adapted to the intricacies of the Vietnamese language, while preserving the tonal aspect of Chinese, which carried its influence over from old imperial times. Vietnam's contemporary nation building process was shaped by important transitions, which include French colonialism, the Indochina wars, the separation of the country in two halves, the Cold War, communist reunification, the Western embargo, significant waves of refugees, economic and constitutional political reforms followed by unprecedented economic growth, the return of its diaspora, and new inflows of foreigners (tourists and expats), among others. It is beyond the purview of this research to account for these in detail, although a few historical digressions are informative to qualify the precedents of Western-Vietnamese relations. Notably, these precedents are at the base of important social constructs that substantiate nationhood. Still today, Vietnam's regulating politico-cultural institutions recount and remember these encounters, often as folkloric tales of national heroism, in school curricula, current televised broadcasting, and as governing principles. These are part and parcel of the Vietnamese collective consciousness, as aspects that reify the nation as a key marker of differentiation.

Of particular importance in the production of Vietnam as a modern state, French colonialism appears as fundamental event. Colonial attacks on Vietnam began in 1859. "In […] 1862 the region around Saigon became for all intents and purposes a French

[66] Chinese (especially Cantonese) as well as French have influenced the evolution of the Vietnamese language. A Romanized alphabet was adopted because it was more conducive to general literacy, although additional diacritics were added to accommodate six tones (five in the South), including glottal- as well as fricative-ending syllables. Key differences in accents, in the pronunciation of monophthongs, diphthongs and triphthongs, and to a lesser extent in vocabulary and figures of speech still exist between south, central and north Vietnam.

colony, and pressure was put on the Annamite [imperial] capital of Hué," (Schalk, 1998: 10) to cede power to the French.[67] While the Chinese had been known for their exploitative propensity against Vietnamese,[68] French colonialism in Vietnam is also linked to sordid practices of domination, including labor and resource exploitation as well as systematic sexual exploitation of both Vietnamese men and women.[69] Conventional and mainstream history tends to occult how class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality are embedded in Vietnam's international and cross-cultural encounters. Yet, it is critical to review these in order to understand whether and how expatriates in Vietnam today may be reproducing old patterns of domination/differentiation.

Colonialism was constructed in French literature among other fields of representation, as a process, which entailed three periods: the conquest or 'heroic'[70] period, the adaptation period (entailing pacification, as well as administrative and

[67] Indochina was divided into 3 administrative provinces: Cochin China, Annam and Tonkin.

[68] "Allegations of Chinese sexual exploitation of Vietnamese women mirrored allegations of Chinese economic exploitation of the Vietnamese population, as these colonial *compradores* [merchants-buyers] were [… considered to have earned] unwarranted wealth [… before returning to] China. [… Par] In late 1919, Vietnamese frustration with apparent Chinese exploitation rose to new heights with a middle-class boycott of Chinese businesses." (Peters, 2009)

[69] Archives show that French colonial administrators raised the issue of prostitution and human trafficking, though it is reported that: "French soldiers may have at times played a role in the sordid industry. Rumors during the wars of conquest accused French troops and their allies of abusing indigenous women and selling them into Chinese prostitution. In Phnom Penh in 1859, Chinese and Vietnamese refugees from the French capture of the Saigon region portrayed the brutal conduct of the soldiers towards 'defenseless women,' speaking of it as 'the behavior of savages.' Administrators long remembered the 'panic' of late 1859 which started in the Saigon region: 'everywhere people spoke of girls kidnapped to be sold in China or Singapore…Rumors abounded that "Western barbarians" were known for selling women, and that a European ran the enterprise.' [Par.] Twenty-five years later, when the French conquered Tonkin, again rumors spread of French troops raping local women. The Scottish journalist James George Scott provided an eyewitness account in 1884: '[M]en of the Foreign Legion surrounded […] quarters of Hanoi, and went in by turns to abuse women […]. This sometimes happened two or three nights running, yet none of them were ever caught or punished.' " (Peters, 2009)

[70] Malleret considered the period ranging from the French capture of Saigon in 1859 to the end of the 1890s as the heroic period. (Malleret, 1934)

economic organization) and the bourgeois period.[71] Potent orientalist imagery, laden in class, racial/ethnic, gendered and sexual prejudice, emerged from this period.

> The Exposition Coloniales Internationale de Paris homogenizes and consolidates the heterogeneity of Indochina's history and geography through a variety of representations. As mentioned earlier, the Exposition constructs and disseminates these representations to an impressionable public already acquainted with the exotic colonies through the press, political discourse, literary writings, and cinema. […] The Exposition is therefore the site where strategies of containment and identity formation are at their most effective. What is at stake in these representations of other cultures and their peoples, and what do these representations tell us about French colonial ideology? […] What allowed the French to speak of a sexualized and feminized Indochina? What were the modes of identification conceived to stimulate and satisfy these desires and phantasms for the exotic? (Norindr, 1996: 20)

Postcolonial critiques (Norindr, 1996; Cooper, 2000) have debunked Orientalist depictions of the Indochinese and Vietnamese and reminded us, of the gender and sexual implications of Western Othering practices. As a colonial enterprise, Indochina was 'gendered' and 'engendered', but also 'sexualized' through various practices of representation.

> Fictional accounts of the Franco-Indochinese relationship often alluded to this sexualised [sic] dimension of the colonial imagination. In Farrère's Les Civilisés (1905), chronologically nearer to the male-dominated "adventure" stories of the 19th century portrayals, Indochina still retains the allure of a "virgin" territory. One of Farrère's three protagonists, Fierce, is […] a sexual adventurer, seeking new delights and sensations in the Indochinese capital, which is laid before him to be taken and ravished. Here, the novel makes use of the familiar trope of the colony as sexual utopia—peopled by obliging native women. […] The analogy between the conquest of a colonial territory and rape is alluded to in Fierce's violation of an indigenous woman […]. The further allusion to Saigon as a "marché aux femmes," (Farrère, 1905, p. 21) emphasises [sic] that women were viewed as the "booty" of the conqueror. (Cooper, 2000: 751)

[71] See "Saigon blanche, métisse, rouge" in Franchini (1992).

Patriarchal and chauvinist constructs about 'Indochinese women' as both 'colonial subjects' and 'sexual objects' promoted exogamous sexual practices/encounters. Common intimate relations involving expatriate men and Vietnamese women resulted in a Eurasian métissage.[72] Gender, sexuality and race/ethnicity are deeply embedded in constructions of oriental and Vietnamese subjects and this is carried over, affecting practices of Othering and construction of the sexualized colonial Other.

> the colonies, colonizers and colonized were in very intimate contact; native women were available and became sexual partners as the colonizers desired it. The colonies were places where the French appropriated land, goods and women, and in fact one of the incentives for going to the colonies was the promise of adventures, which entailed unlimited access to women. Postcards, posters and advertisements from the period enticed prospective colonizers, travellers [sic] and soldiers by displaying native women and young girls. Exotic sexual encounters were part of the 'imaginaire colonial' [colonial imaginary]. (Sherzer, 1998: 105-106)

During this period, European expatriates with their internalized ideas about 'the Other' and about the constructed/perceived inferiority of non-whites, generally played an active role in (re)producing typical 'Occidental-Oriental' divisions or practices of boundary maintenance, extending from structures of racial/ethnic inequality and propagated through colonial practices and power relations. French rule epitomized all the paradoxes and contradictions of colonial domination: to educate and cultivate indigenous populations[73]; to "appropriate" in order to "protect and preserve", while making obsolete

[72] "Métissage is a term invented during the colonial period, as mixed blood children were born from relationships between French men and Asiatic, African and North African women in the colonies. It had negative connotations, implying miscegenation, mongrelization and impurity." (Sherzer, 1998: 105)

[73] The education of 'Indochinese subjects' was central to the role of the French because it was believed that 'Western educated' Vietnamese could play a future role in the administration of the colony. However, French education allowed young Vietnamese intellectuals to develop a critical disposition towards French rule in Vietnam, leading to transformations that effectively produced a class of radical philosophers who promoted forms of anti-colonial, and communist Vietnamese nationalism. (Norindr, 1996: 46-47)

the cultural art forms and crafts of local communities and showing them as 'museum exhibits'; to teach but also impose new forms of reason, to "rescue" the "poor souls of savages", to extract but also exploit labor and materials, all in a manner which supposedly "provides access" to the civilizing process.

Foreign presence in Vietnam has long been linked to the emergence of structural inequalities between foreigners and Vietnamese nationals. Notably, the current structure of inequalities between expatriates and 'average' Vietnamese nationals recall a certain colonial imagery, especially in terms of expatriates' reliance on cheap Vietnamese domestic labor, and in terms of assumed and/or actual financial disparities created by a 'two-tiered' salary system.

One respondent argued that Vietnamese are also to 'blame' for the reproduction of inequalities: frustrated by this, a survey participant recognized "the perceived power dynamic of the white person being in charge and superior, which the Vietnamese seem to perpetuate." Historical politico-cultural antecedents may well have created paradoxical power dynamics between Vietnamese and the West (and Westerners). Indeed, white Western domination and the types of class inequalities that were introduced as a consequence of colonial exploitation may be reproduced even today in some subtle and not-so-subtle ways. In Chapters 4 through 6, I attempt to highlight how adaptation may entail the reproduction of post-/neo-colonial practices and imperial identities (Cook 2005,

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Taittinger estimated that "over two-thirds of the Vietnamese students in France were Communists or pro-Communists, [so] he proposed [….that] Vietnamese were to be returned to a mythical (and passive) ancestral past, a golden age of colonialism when education was not even an issue." (Norindr, 1996: 47). It was impossible for 'Western educated', now 'cultivated Vietnamese intellectuals' to return to a milieu where they could be free from colonial oppression. (Norindr, 1996: 48)

2007), though my analysis remains post-structural and phenomenological, and focused on the adaptation process.

The First Indochina War against the French erupted in 1946[74], ending in 1954 with the battle of Dien Bien Phu. Despite Vietnamese victory and as a further affront, the Western international community formulated in the 1954 Geneva Accords, conditions that would 'formally' divide Vietnam at the 17th parallel into a Soviet-supported Northern half and a US-backed 'anti-communist' Southern half, denoting the construction of a bipolar stage for world politics[75]. Between 1954 and 1964, North-South conflicts escalated. To support the anti-communist movement in the South, the U.S. and allies began sending aid and surveillance efforts in response to Vietcong insurgencies. 1959 marked the beginning of direct U.S. intervention in Vietnam's domestic conflict, and the emergence of a new influx of Western expatriates. The Viet Minh were dissolved and replaced by the communist Vietcong. China and Cambodia progressively intensified their collusion against Vietnam throughout the late 60s, 70s and early 80s, (Bayly, 2004: 331) as Vietnam aligned itself with the Soviet bloc and as a key opponent of Pol Pot's

[74] Ultimately, critical anti-colonial and radical nationalist discourses were instrumental in mobilizing the masses and in promoting sacrifice and resilience for the sake of the nation. (Karnow, 1983; Franchini, 1988; Raffin, 2005) Against the French, Ho Chi Minh and General Vo Nguyen Giap formulated the terms of an ultimate sacrifice for the nation. Notably, Ho Chi Minh is quoted as saying "You can kill ten of my men for every one I kill of yours, yet even at those odds, you will lose and I will win." (Karnow, 1983: 18) And General Vo Nguyen Giap explained that the country was ready to fight for "ten, fifteen, twenty, fifty years, regardless of cost, until final victory." (Karnow, 1983: 18)

[75] In the late 50s, divergent political views were already being suppressed. Freedom of expression had been advocated as part of the anti-colonial struggle against the French, but now under the intensifying influence of fascist Stalinism, the Workers Party launched a campaign against 'revisionism' that turned political criticism into public morality issues. (McHale, 2002) For intellectuals who were censored, arrested and/or imprisoned, such as Tran Duc Thao (Minh Duc), Nguyen Huu Dang and Thuy An (Luu Thi Yen) punishment included slandering, privation, incarceration, house arrest and/or (long-term or permanent) removal from both public and intellectual life. For repressed advocates "the material privations of these years, [often entailed] living conditions [that were …] "more wretched than a dog's"." (McHale, 2002: 23)

collectivization campaign.[76] Economic interests were also at play, although the prevailing revolutionary nationalist discourse whitewashed foreign economic interests, emphasizing political ideology as the foundation for an alliance with foreign forces.

> Beginning in 1975, a highly profitable new world of multi-directional consumer goods trading began to open up between Vietnam and the Soviet and Eastern European socialist economies. At the Vietnam end, these far reaching developments rapidly became bound up with the massive changes that were affecting social and economic life across the entire socialist world. (Bayly, 2004: 333)

Almost a decade into the second Indochina war, media coverage of war atrocities, like the 1968 Tet offensive, shifted international public opinion. Images shocked the masses and fuelled anti-war protests at the height of the Peace and Love movement. The US, incurring heavy losses with little progress from their point of view,[77] eventually went from direct intervention in the conflict to enablement of anti-communist resistance.[78] With time, communism gained ground in the South, thanks to the Ho Chi Minh trail, expert guerrilla tactics, strategic literacy and political education geared towards the

[76] The conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia escalated, leading to a time of direct strife (1975-1979), an attempt to depose and replace the Khmer Rouge leadership (1979), and on-going occupation of the Cambodian territory by the Vietnamese between 1978 and 1989. (Russell 1987, Duffy 1994) According to UNHCR sources (UNHCR, 2003, 2005, 2010a and b, 2011) waves of Cambodian refugees came to Vietnam to escape persecution, and remained stateless for decades due to Vietnam's lack of asylum provisions. The number of Cambodian refugees in Vietnam went from 34,000 in 1995, to 15,945 in 2000 and to 2,357 in 2008. In July of 2010 Vietnamese authorities agreed to naturalize the remaining refugees.

[77] Recognizing the practice of indoctrination, Le Xuan Khoa (2002) argues that "[i]ndoctrinated with communist ideology and anti-imperialist teachings, the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) engaged in combat with religious fanaticism and sustained physical deficiencies and losses of human lives with remarkable endurance." (5)

[78] … a process coined 'Vietnamization' of the war effort.

masses.[79] In 1969, Ho Chi Minh passed away, but with the cult to the ancestors, Vietnamese idolization of this leader, helped in national 'hegemony-production'.[80]

The period between 1964 and 1972 marks the peak of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. Between 1965 and the end of 1966, the number of American troops on the ground jumped from 60,000 to 385,000, not withstanding the additional 60,000 navy officers offshore. By the end of 1967 and 1968, American troops numbered 500,000 and 540,000 respectively; and by 1969, although the death toll of American forces reached 33,629, the number of American solders on the ground remained high, at 480,000. Numbers dwindled thereafter, with 280,000 and 140,000 in 1970 and 1971 correspondingly, and less than 30,000 by the end of 1972. The last American troops and American civilian officials were repatriated on March 29th 1973. (United States History Online, [no date]) From 1964 to 1973, considering the turnover of troops (through death and cycle replacement) from the Army, the Navy, the Marines and the Air Force, the total number of military men and women having served in Vietnam is estimated to have reached 8,744,000 (comparatively, half of the total number for WWII). Adjacently, at their peak, allied Free World Military Forces numbered 65,000 and were composed mainly of South Korean (50,000), Australian, Thai, Filipino and New Zealander troops.

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[79] For Ho Chi Minh, Vietnamese traditions and cultural values were compatible with the emerging politico-cultural expectations of a progressive patriotic movement. "To defer to the claims of filial piety, said Ho Chi Minh, to feel bound in duty to virtuous exemplary forebears, was in keeping with the values of a modern patriot selflessly serving party, state and nation, exalting youth and progress, and looking fearlessly to the future." (Bayly, 2004: 330) He set out to mobilize every household as part of a mass literacy and political education campaign. "Launching the mass literacy drive in 1946, Ho Chi Minh identified the household unit as a key site for its achievement […]." (Bayly, 2004: 341-342 [Footnote 14])

[80] Still today, the face of Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam's most renowned national hero, and one of Time's 100 most influential personalities of the 20th century, is plastered on countless billboards across the country, and on every piece of Vietnamese currency.

(Museum Resource Center, 1997) The sheer volume of expats in Vietnam during this period lends itself to questioning on the nature of relationships between Westerners and Vietnamese nationals, particularly in terms of the gender, sexual, racial/ethnic and class dynamics of cross-cultural encounters and relations.

Sexual encounters between host-country nationals and military personnel are common, but when servicemen left Vietnam in the early 70s, thousands of 'mixed-race' children, 'Children of the Dust' or 'Bui Doi' as they are known, were abandoned.[81] (Sherzer, 1998; Thanh Tran, 1999; Stoler, 2002; Chau Nguyen, 2005; Firpo, 2007; Saada, 2007) Operation Baby Lift[82] and later, the Vietnamese Amerasian Homecoming Act (McKelvey, 1999) were some of the strategies put in place by the American administration to 'deal' with some of the consequences of the Vietnam-American wartime encounters.

U.S. military withdrawal from Vietnam took place officially in 1972, three years after Ho Chi Minh's death, in anticipation of elections meant, once again, to unify the country. However, another political coup involving U.S.-backed Southern officials halted these plans. Meanwhile Vietcong forces advanced and took control of larger areas in the

[81] In *The Dust of Life: America's Children Abandoned in Vietnam*, McKelvey (1999) explains: "The children of U.S. citizens and Vietnamese women, many Amerasians grew up in poverty as "half-breed" (con lai) outcasts on the fringes of Vietnamese society. Discriminated against for their mixed race and obvious connection to the American enemy, Amerasians were often denied educational and employment opportunities as children of "collaborators." Many were abandoned, not only by their American fathers, but by their mothers and subsequent caretakers as well." (McKelvey, 1999: 3)

[82] Operation Babylift was an evacuation operation targeting Vietnamese 'orphans of war' and Vietnamese Amerasian babies. Throughout April 1975, it is estimated that up to 4000 children were evacuated to the U.S., Canada, Australia, and other countries in Europe. (Public Broadcasting Service, [no date])

South.[83] Political dissidents who fought against the Vietcong were conceived as enemies of state and for that, those who could not escape in time faced punishment.[84]

> There are no exact numbers of how many died, although estimates range from 50,000 to "several hundred thousands" (Joes, 2001, 36). Those who offer these high numbers also indicate that the Vietnamese Communists defined the targeted class enemy "rich landlords" to also include those peasants who exceeded the smallest permissible holding by only one quarter of an acre. Thousands of these targets were executed outright; many were buried alive. Regardless of those killed, the Vietnamese Communists justified their actions with a commonly repeated statement, "Better to kill ten innocent persons than to let one enemy escape" (Joes, 2001, 36). Often the family relatives of those who had been executed were isolated. Under orders by the Vietnamese Communists, the isolated were shunned by the local communities (Joes, 2001, 36). (Do, 2004-2005: 15)

Modern Vietnam was largely forged through warfare and for some, this 'history' contributed to perpetuating a certain antagonism in the spirit of international relations, marked by the rendering or construction of two main 'opposing' worldviews of civilization. (Watelet, 2001-2012) 1975 marks the fall of Saigon or its liberation, depending on where one stands. It also marks the reunification of the country under a strict communist administration, which underplayed how retribution and repression might be employed to deal with subversive political ideologies.[85]

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[83] When Northern forces took control of the South and Saigon, anyone who had been associated to American military or service personnel, including mothers of American-Vietnamese offspring could be at risk of persecution for having colluded with the enemy. (Thanh Tran, 1999)

[84] Takaki (1989), in *Strangers from a Different Shore,* estimated that ten to fifteen thousand Vietnamese who had participated in the anti-communist war effort or their relatives were evacuated before the fall of Saigon. Based on a subsequent arrangement with Vietnam's authorities between 1975 and the late nineties mainly, tens of thousands of Vietnamese Vietnam war veterans that had sided with the Americans were released and expatriated to the U.S. as refugees of war.

[85] "May 15 [1975] victory celebration, […] the Workers' Party solemnly appealed for national unity and reconstruction with these assuring words: "Only the American imperialists have been defeated. All Vietnamese are the victors. Anyone with Vietnamese blood should take pride in this common victory of the whole nation." This statement sounded like a preannouncement of a general amnesty resulting from the PRG's [the communist led Provisional Revolutionary Government] professed policy of national reconciliation and concord." (Le Xuan Khoa, 2002: 4)

After reunification, the regime sought to strengthen itself by eliminating subversive elements including alternative political parties within the political administration. In hindsight, 1975 also corresponds to the advent of Vietnam's regime of re-education, and the indefinite containment of POWs, southern elites, anti-communists, and political activists into re-education camps.[86] Anyone suspected of treason against the state could be arbitrarily detained and punished,[87] and this is still the case today as political mobilization and public expression in support of multi-party democracy are seriously reprimanded. In Vietnam, state controlled media and censorship strategies, along with strict defensive legislation against subversive radicalism, along with propagandist indoctrination (Le Xuan Khoa, 2002) worked to deter subversive mobilization, and the internalization of such constructs contributed to creating a particular national collective consciousness that ensures a desired form of politico-cultural order.

Repressive social control strategies involving censorship and limiting freedom of association, freedom of speech, social association, and public protest are still pervasive today. Expats generally lament this reality, as evidenced by comments posted in blogs

[86] "Those who were affiliated with the defeated Republic of Vietnam or the U.S. government, including former government and military officials and others opposed to Communist rule, were screened and many sent to "reeducation" camps, in some cases for years." (Ashwill & Thai Gnoc Diep, 2005: 74) What was officially expected to be a short-term 'politico-cultural rehabilitation' turned into years or even decades of imprisonment for some. (Le Xuan Khoa, 2002; Sagan & Denney, 1982)

[87] In 1990, "Amnesty International documented that the Provisional Government acknowledged at least 40,000 prisoners, including 29,000 former military personal [sic], were transferred to reeducation camps throughout the country (Matson, 2001, 4)." (Do, 2004-2005: 21) But numbers are difficult to determine and different estimates exist. It was reported that in earlier years, Re22 re-education camps housed "between 100,000 and 300,000 individuals [and] Tran's book Lost Years (1988) reported a ceiling figure of 1,000,000 former South Vietnamese military and political prisoners detained (Matson, 2001, 4)." (Do, 2004-2005: 21-22) According to Matson (2001) about 150 reeducation camps are thought to have existed across the country, whereby every province had a system with a central facility, each with sets of subsidiary camps.

and social networking sites and in respondent narratives. One of the latest attempts by the Government of Vietnam to contain public dissent came in the form of a July 2013 decision to ban and punish the use of social networking sites (blogs, Facebook and Twitter were targeted particularly) for the purpose of disseminating (posting, sharing or discussing) public information.[88] This law, which was set to become effective in September 2013, was put in place to help maintain the status quo and "protect" the Vietnamese government and Vietnamese politico-cultural institutions/elites from public defamation[89]. "One Western diplomat, who declined to be named, said political bloggers were already being arrested, but the new rules would give the government "a piece of paper to point to."" (Sapa-DPA, 2013) On this issue, international news and expat forums were buzzing, the former about the human and civil rights implications of this move, and the latter, about how this might affect their communication practices online.

Until reforms in 1986 (Doi Moi),[90] millions of Vietnamese, many of them 'boat people', left the country illegally, some under artillery fire, in an attempt to escape political repression, periodic scarcity and economic insecurity. Many perished, though

[88] "Decree 72 on "Management, Provision, Use of Internet Services and Information Content Online" states that blogs and social media sites must only contain personal information. [Par.]"Personal electronic sites are only allowed to put news owned by that person, and are not allowed to 'quote', 'gather' or summarise information from press organisations or government websites," local media quoted Hoang Vinh Bao, director of the Broadcasting and Electronic Information Department at the Ministry of Information and Communications, as saying. [Par.] The ban was approved by Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung on July 15, communicated to Vietnamese press late Wednesday, and was due to come into force on September 1." (Sapa DPA, 2013)

[89] "The law, which is set to come into effect in September, will also ban foreign internet service providers from "providing information that is against Vietnam, undermining national security, social order and national unity ... or information distorting, slandering and defaming the prestige of organisations, honour and dignity of individuals."" (Letwin, 2013)

[90] "A key policy line of the renovation (doi moi) is to implement an 'open door' policy (chinh sach mo cua) [… and a] move towards economic liberalisation [sic] [… which may in some ways] contradict communist ideology and socialist values promoted by the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) and socialist state. The consequence has been rapid socio-economic changes occurring in a monopolistic political system, which can potentially trigger popular discontent." (Nguyen, 2005: 1)

many more found asylum in developed Western countries. (Do, 2004-2005; Karnow, 1983; Tucker, 1999) Vietnam became known as a country of emigration[91], and Vietnamese immigrant in receiving countries became recognized as a growing diaspora. (Chan & Dorais, 1998; Carruthers, 2001, 2008; Sidel, 2007; Kawakami, 2008) The volume of refugee claimants from Vietnam dwindled from the late 80s onward, but tens of thousands of Vietnamese were still in refugee camps around Asia and the world, well into de late 90s and early 2000s. The U.S.A., Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the U.K. and Japan accepted the highest numbers of Vietnamese refugees.[92]

Vietnam's 1986 Doi Moi reforms improved living conditions in Vietnam and the 1992 constitution allowed Vietnamese who left illegally to return to their homeland with special *sui generis* privileges, such as being dispensed of Visa requirements. Since then, Viet Kieu have been encouraged to return to Vietnam. In a series of recent articles surrounding the 2009 diaspora reunion conference in Hanoi, Viet Kieu were hailed to return to Vietnam to take advantage of the country's unprecedented development. (BBC News, Nov. 24, 2009) These reforms also lead to the progressive opening of borders to foreigners and foreign trade. So as the outflow of emigrants from Vietnam dwindled, new inflows of Viet Kieu and foreigners became noticeable.

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[91] "Vietnamese refugees have been the subject of studies conducted in the United States, France, Australia, and Canada that are often financed by government concerned with the arrival of large populations of people needing refuge." (Bousquet 1987: 3). In France, studies of Vietnamese emigrants were first published in response to the influx that followed the 1954 Geneva Accords and the division of the country into North and South, and following a second significant influx that followed the fall/liberation of Saigon in 1975; while in the U.S. many studies were produced and published in response to the post 1975 influx of Vietnamese immigrant mostly refugees). French and American researchers focused primarily on "immediate occupational, economic, social, cultural and mental adaptation to the host country (Stein 1979 and 1982, Montero 1979, Carkroff 1979, Lui 1979)." (Bousquet, 1987: 3)

[92] The "1980 census recorded 231,120 foreign born from Vietnam in the United States. By 2006, the number of Vietnamese immigrants had quintupled to 1.1 million, making them the fifth largest immigrant group in the United States after the Mexican, Filipino, Chinese, and Indian foreign born." (Terrazas, 2008)

> Canadian development organizations, followed by investors and firms, began exploring and setting up offices [in Vietnam] in the early 1990s. The receding flows of Vietnamese people settling in Canada in the early 1990s coincided with the nascent flows of Vietnamese-origin Canadians and non-Vietnamese-origin Canadians travelling [sic], working and (re)-settling in Vietnam. (Trang Nguyen & Vu Thi Hai Anh, 2010: 3-4)

This, by and large, represents a symptom of important social, economic and political changes in Vietnam, making it a unique receiving context with specific structural and cultural conditions, which will affect expats in different ways, based on their relative class, racial/ethnic, gender and sexual positionality and dispositions.

2.2-. Vietnam: A unique receiving context

Studies that focus on cohorts of expatriates in countries with single-communist party regimes are quite rare, with the exception of studies on expatriates in China –with a focus on Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing. (Bainbridge, 2002; Yeoh & Willis, 2005; Arieli, 2007; Farrer, 2010; Leonard, 2010a; Mouton, 2010; Salmon et al., 2010) However, the case of Vietnam as a receiving society cannot be compared to Mainland China or other post-embargo state because it combines structural and cultural conditions that are reminiscent of its specific historical legacies of resistance against the West. Vietnam is distinct due to its postcolonial and post-embargo condition and for the impact of Indochina wars on the nation, all of which play a role in influencing Vietnamese positionality and dispositions towards the swelling flow of incoming foreigners (tourists and expats alike).

Vietnam's politico-cultural history is grounded in the production of a fundamental attachment to nationalism and nationhood, which is systematically reproduced in

Vietnamese mainstream media and articulated in dominant ideological tropes, in complex household and community practices of remembrance.[93] For example, the centrality of nationalist propaganda –within the frame of Vietnam's state-controlled media– has been essential in allowing political and institutional leaders to put forward nationalist values and a particular collectivist worldview. A token of this heritage, which is still in use today, is the network of loud speakers that hang amidst the often messy telephone and electricity infrastructure of Vietnamese cities and villages, blaring national news, party lines and nationalist music in streets across the country, usually once, but sometimes twice a day.

In Vietnam, the spirit of struggle and resistance against foreigners is emphasized in the construction of nationalism and nationhood. In the words of Dang Anh Tuan, "[b]eing Vietnamese is being capable of resisting above all any assimilation and foreign ideology and being proud of having in his veins the blood of the Dragon." (Dang Anh Tuan, 1997-2011)[94] A central dimension of Vietnamese pride is based on remembering how the nation –bound by the construction of kinship or perhaps as an imagined community (Anderson, 1991 [1983]) –is prepared to resist against foreign intrusion. This *conscience collective* is the product of years of colonial and postcolonial struggle

[93] As Vietnam undergoes extensive economic reforms and reestablishes [sic] a position in the global market, questions of when to evoke the past and how to remember the war take on renewed significance. In contrast to a perceived U.S. obsession with the war, Vietnamese citizens and their government regularly assert that Vietnam "has closed the past and looks to the future" [Khep lai qua khu, huong ve tuong lai]. Yet, as Renan (1990) has suggested, the forces of memory and forgetting that constitute a nation's history also shape and secure its collective visions of the future. (Schwenkel, 2006: 4-5)

[94] A Vietnamese legend suggests that the Vietnamese nation was created through the coupling of a dragon and a fairy. The dragon laid 1000 eggs, which hatched into the Vietnamese people. The symbolism of the dragon speaks to the very spirit of resilience and fierceness believed to be at the heart of Vietnamese nationhood.

combined with systematic use of indoctrinating practices by authorities. In fact, Vietnamese nationalism in Vietnam is deeply anchored on the internalization of constructs, which promote ethnic, and politico-cultural pride, along with wariness towards foreign interests and influence. Consequently, cross-cultural encounters between expatriates and host-country nationals are modulated by the specificity of insider-outsider dynamics that lead to practices of boundary maintenance and biased forms of representation, which contribute to the normalization of Othering, practices of mutual exclusion, and mutual misunderstandings.

> State-produced films and plays about the resistance wars against France and the United States are common [in Vietnam] on television and in theaters. CDs and karaoke videos with "red music" from the revolution are bought and sold throughout much of the country, and Vietnamese memoirs of war, a more recent publishing trend, are in high demand by domestic consumers. In the arts, wartime posters and socialist realist paintings of Ho Chi Minh are on display and available for purchase […]. Whereas the cultural production and marketing of the war in the United States often reproduce tenacious cold war rhetoric (such as killing "VC" [Vietcong] in video games), in Vietnam such commodities typically communicate revolutionary values of heroic resistance and sacrifice. (Schwenkel, 2006: 7)

Old models/practices of representation pervade mainstream outlets and are likely to support the reproduction of social divides that are embedded in the historical legacies that orient cross-cultural relations based on the construction of class, nationality and origin, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc.

While Vietnam's accelerated entry into the global economy marks unprecedented growth, it remains a socialist republic under the leadership of a single communist party, which opted to mitigate political and economic dissonance by adopting a vague discourse on what fiscal socialism might entail. Fiscal socialism is the official term used by

government officials, in discussing the current economic orientation of policy reforms. While it is meant to avoid destabilizing the political status quo, it is unclear what it means or how it translates into a bigger vision of Vietnamese civil society. Adjacently, market level-reforms seem to indicate that capitalism is the new modus operandi. For expats, such contradictions set the tone for confusing interactions with the dominant terms and principles of civil organization[95], speaking to a high level of complexity in the configuration of social, political, economic and cultural dynamics.

It took a total of 12 years of negotiation and reforms before Vietnam was finally admitted as a full member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2007. Since then, but starting with the opening of its national stock exchange system in 2000, Vietnam has undergone rapid growth. According to the U.S. Department of State, Vietnam's 2009 GDP was valued at $92.6 billion, while its real growth rate was estimated at 5.32% for 2009 and 6.52% through the third quarter of 2010 (year-on-year). (U.S. Department of State, 2011) Moreover, the BBC reports: "Vietnam, a one-party Communist state, has one of south-east [sic] Asia's fastest-growing economies and has set its sights on becoming a developed nation by 2020." (BBC News, 2011) Indeed, unprecedented transformations have taken place in the last two decades. The Hanoi and HCM City of today

> bear little resemblance to their former selves in the immediate postwar period. As recently as the early 1990s, both cities were described as sleepy towns. Those were the days when Vietnam was just beginning to reform its economy and open up to the rest of world. It was before the presence of disposable income that enables people to purchase motorbikes, cars, cell

[95] "As one expatriate with ten years of in-country experience observed, there are too many secrets and not enough transparency in a system of evolving legal, financial, and regulatory systems, inflexible labor laws, and a lack of freedom of information. There also are not enough qualified people to enforce those laws that are on the books." (Ashwill & Thai Gnoc Diep, 2005: 154)

> phones, and fashionable clothes, or to go out for a night on the town; before the appearance of foreigners from anywhere other than the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe; before the advent of information technology that would link Vietnam with the global community. (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005: 4)

Steady improvements in living conditions (infrastructural and material realities) coupled with the low cost of living make Vietnam an attractive destination for expats. Already the pace of change is unprecedented. Many amenities and conveniences that expatriates from developed countries take for granted 'at home' are now available in Vietnam, which serves to ensure high standards of living for those who can afford it. Expats are now an integral part of the Vietnamese social, cultural and economic landscape, yet despite their relative economic privilege and high social status, they remain outsiders, highly identifiable, often targeted for scams, and regularly mistaken for tourists.

Most Westerners come to Vietnam knowing the rules of a 'free market economy' and the values imparted by liberal democracies, not realizing that albeit the country's amazing modernization, Vietnam authorities impose many restrictions on both economic and cultural activities, not to mention the added complexities of informality, corruption, rapidly changing policies, the gaps and ambiguities in consumer and property ownership rights, discrepancies related to freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of association, etc. Vietnam is in the lower tier of the 2012 Economic Freedom Index[96], ranking 136th on 184 countries. Table 1 presents Vietnam's score for ten economic freedom benchmarks, constructed based on the presumed requirements of global modern

[96] The Economic Freedom Index is produced by the Washington based think-tank The Heritage Foundation. It measures 10 benchmarks, which are graded on 100, and compares a total of 183 countries, based on their respective and overall scores. The 10 benchmarks are: Business Freedom, Investment Freedom, Trade Freedom, Financial Freedom, Fiscal Freedom, Property Rights, Government Spending, Freedom from Corruption, Monetary Freedom and Labor Freedom.

industries. Although it scores close to the world average for a number of benchmarks, it also scores poorly for investment freedom, financial freedom, property rights and freedom from corruption.

Ten Economic Freedoms of Vietnam		
Benchmarks	**Vietnam's score**	**Average of 184 countries**
Business Freedom	61.1	Avg. 64.7
Trade Freedom	79.6	Avg. 74.5
Fiscal Freedom	76.5	Avg. 76.9
Government Spending	66.5	Avg. 66.5
Monetary Freedom	75.1	Avg. 74.4
Investment Freedom[97]	15.0	Avg. 50.7
Financial Freedom[98]	30.0	Avg. 48.6
Property Rights[99]	15.0	Avg. 43.4
Freedom from Corruption[100]	27.0	Avg. 40.4
Labor Freedom	67.3	Avg. 61.4
Table 1: Economic Freedom Index – Score for Vietnam Source: Heritage Foundation, Economic Index		

[97] "Foreign investment in many sectors […] is either prohibited or requires government approval. Deterrents to investment include unwieldy bureaucracy, non-transparent regulations, corruption, and an unreliable and cumbersome legal system. […] Most transactions in money market and capital instruments, derivatives, commercial credits, and direct investments require government approval." (Heritage Foundation, 2011)

[98] "The state remains heavily involved in Vietnam's underdeveloped financial sector. Less than 20 percent of the population has a bank account. […] Regulation, supervision, and transparency fall short of international standards […]." (Heritage Foundation, 2011)

[99] "Only the rudiments of a system to protect property rights have been established. The judiciary is not independent, and corruption is common. Contracts are weakly enforced, and resolution of disputes can take years. All land belongs to the state, but foreigners can conduct real estate transactions. Foreign investors may lease land for periods of 50 years, or up to 70 years in some poor areas. Infringement of intellectual property rights is common." (Heritage Foundation, 2011)

[100] "Corruption is perceived as widespread. Vietnam ranks 120th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2009. Corruption in Vietnam is due [mainly…] to a lack of transparency, accountability, and media freedom as well as low pay for government officials and inadequate systems for holding officials accountable […]." (Heritage Foundation, 2011)

The idiosyncrasies of Vietnam's political economy include rampant low to upper level corruption, manifold administrative layers, ambiguous protocols and procedural requirements, and the prevalence of informality in market relations. Local structural and cultural conditions are complex and paradoxical, whereby structural flexibility in one area may be countered by structural rigidity in another. So newly arrived expatriates from highly developed countries are likely to experience a degree of culture shock as they learn how to contend with local structural/cultural conditions. For instance, expatriates may experience relatively low levels of 'public surveillance' and a lax attitude towards public safety laws (construction, infrastructure, traffic, public hygiene, etc.), while Vietnamese authorities generally attempt to keep firm control and monitoring over 'foreign initiatives'. In Vietnam,

> every expatriate organization and individual belongs somewhere in the Vietnamese system. The government office where an organization belongs is similar to a Vietnamese older sibling, who takes care of and protects the younger [not to mention 'monitor' it]. […] Foreign businesses belong to the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI); international NGOs to the People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM); academic institutions to the Ministry of Education and Training or Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment (MOSTE); journalists to the Foreign Press Center (Borton 2001, 10). Vietnam is not a place for mavericks, lone wolves, or people who find it difficult to work as part of a cross-cultural team. (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005: 111)

The imagery of the 'older sibling' taking care of, and protecting its kin, although coherent with the centrality of 'family' in Vietnamese society, is also reminiscent of the workings of 'informal relations' within 'formal administrative/public structures'. Amidst such contradictions, complexities and paradoxes, foreigners in Vietnam are also quick to

notice what seems to them as 'systemic disorder and ineffectiveness', stemming in part from nebulous procedures and vague policy administration.

Moreover, the multifaceted intricacies that are embedded in the language[101], in uniquely appropriated ideologies/worldviews and in patterns of practice that pragmatically blend tradition and modernity, are bound to impel cross-cultural challenges. This is why

> [e]xpatriates who come to Vietnam thinking they have all the answers, expertise, and resources inadvertently create self-defeating scenarios by placing their Vietnamese partners in an inferior role. Demanding immediate results without adapting to the Vietnamese way and speaking with a Vietnamese 'voice' can create an untenable situation. (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005: 100)

As expatriation might in some way be reminiscent of colonial dynamics, it is worth considering whether/how expatriates, in their adaptive practices and/or in the way they relate to the local culture and Vietnamese nationals, tend to reproduce (consciously or not) forms of structural inequalities. The central problematic of this research is expatriate adaptation and the subjective experiences of expatriates who are distinctly located and disposed in relation to local structural and cultural conditions. With Vietnams multiple successive politico-cultural transitions, this research represents a timely initiative, which also examines the configuration of cross-cultural encounters between Vietnamese nationals and expatriates, and their connection to expatriates' positionality, dispositional propensities, and adaptation practices. As I show in Chapter 3, expatriates in Vietnam are

[101] "Language is the key – Without Vietnamese language one's understanding of Vietnamese culture just scratches the surface. But once you get the hang of it (which starts with the tones), it's quite a ride. Vietnamese language, with its innuendos, puns, nuances, plays-on-words, spoonerisms, politenesses, coarseness, connection to old Chinese words, adoption of French and American vocabulary, and its ability for cussing people out (chửi thề) makes it the number one gate into the nitty gritty of Vietnamese culture and society, and the deeper you go, the greater the rewards." (Minh, 2011a) .

likely to (re)produce, maintain and develop varied ways of fostering their national cultural identities, facilitating their acclimatization to Vietnam, finding ways of 'belonging' within particular communities, negotiating racial/ethnic differentiation, and nurturing their transnational ties. How expatriate adaptation and subjective experiences relate to such relative positions and dispositional propensities is the focus of Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

EXPAT COMMUNITIES AND TRANSNATIONAL BELONGING[102]

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3.1-. Related literature

The expatriate literature relevant to this study can be presented in terms of different themes of relevance: we should discuss material on privileged migrants from rich Western industrialized countries who are living and working abroad in postcolonial developing countries; cover issues surrounding cross-cultural interactions/encounters between people from the Western world and nationals of developing postcolonial countries (as well as the structure of underlying power dynamics and cross-cultural adaptation); and examine scholarly work on expatriates in Vietnam.

On the theme of privileged migrants from rich Western industrialized countries who are living and working abroad in postcolonial countries, the more relevant sources note a general agreement on the continuities of colonialism and on the reproduction of imperial identities, which in the line of corporate, development, philanthropic, educational, household/domestic, community and market fields of practice, are systematically reifying structural inequalities, forms of Othering and exclusionary constructs/dynamics. (Cook, 2005, 2007; Fechter, 2005, 2007; Leonard, 2007, 2008,

[102] The following discussion is based on the results of 26 months of fieldwork in Vietnam, which entailed my own involvement as an observing participant, the conduct of formal participant observation sessions (262 recorded hours), a survey administered to 300 respondents (150 women and 150 men), 39 semi-structured interviews (with 20 women and 19 men) and thematic focus group sessions, notably one on 'the dating scene in Vietnam' and another on 'household management with/without parenting duties'.

2010a, 2010b, 2010c; Fechter & Walsh, 2010; Heron, 2004, 2007, Farrer, 2010) Key authors argue that class, racial, gender, and sexual differentiation is deeply embedded in the structures of postcolonial/imperial households, (Cook, 2007) at work and in organizations (Leonard, 2010b, 2010c), fields of research (Besio, 2003) and development intervention (Heron, 2007), intimate encounters (Farrer, 2010), etc. A number of them concomitantly argue that differences between each case confirm the highly personalized understandings/engagements with power and privilege, appropriating, re-enacting but also rejecting and questioning colonial constructs and categories (Leonard, 2008); and that expatriate narratives cannot be simply reduced to a single postcolonial or neocolonial temporality but that colonial imagery and imaginaries are persisting and salient aspects of expatriate narratives. (Farrer 2010) Focusing on gendered practices of adaptation, various scholars also underline the importance of understanding how overlapping differences in class, race/ethnicity, national-cultural, occupational, sexual, marital and familial positionality affect the subjective experience and adjustment process of expatriate women in postcolonial receiving contexts. (Yeoh and Khoo, 1998; Cook, 2005, 2007) These constitute fundamental contributions to the analysis I present further. Whilst placing an emphasis on Vietnam as a unique postcolonial/post-embargo receiving context for Westerners, it is precisely the problem of positionality and dispositional propensity that I wish to relate to processes of expatriate adjustment and cross-cultural adaptation. With these points of clarification in mind, a phenomenological reading of Bourdieu's concept of habitus along with his theory of practice represents novel contribution to this niche literature.

The above-mentioned sources also overlap with the literature on cross-cultural encounters between people from the Western world and various Others in developing countries. On this topic, the literature on development and transnational activism may also be of some relevance to highlight dominant dynamics that are perpetuated in cross-cultural encounters/relations and which render the problematic position of privileged white Westerners, along with the discourse and constructs they deploy. We know, for example, that paternalism (Devereaux, 2008) and self-interested forms of altruism (Heron 2007) tend to plague development practices; and that mainstream visions of 'global citizenship', as it is fostered in rich OECD countries and through their development agendas, tends to underscore a parallel with forms of benevolence that are rooted in a 'civilizing mission'. (Jefferess, 2008; Andreotti et al., 2009) We know that global activism and the Western representation/mediation of 'Third World' suffering tend to reify and even substantiate (rather than challenge) structural inequalities (Mahrouse, 2008); and that in order to delve into the cultural politics of solidarity beyond 'white Western oppression', we must also engage in an struggle against the internalized 'empire'. (Koopman, 2008) While these are informative in terms of pervasive cross-cultural dynamics considering dominant power schemas and internalized ethos, they say little about the effects of cross-cultural dislocation on the (re)articulation of practices and habituses.

Of greater relevance perhaps, is work that directly addresses cross-cultural adjustment/adaptation and the impact of factors of distinction on such processes. Liao (2010) in her work on EFL expatriate teachers in Taiwan confirms that age, gender,

marital status, nationality, language proficiency, previous cross-cultural experience, cross-cultural training, and work-related organizational contingencies, may influence the cross-cultural adjustment/adaptation process. Unfortunately despite identifying gender as a pivotal marker of difference, Liao's (2010) doctoral research results do little to help clarify how gender influences the subjective experiences of expatriate adaptation. Liao (2010) also completely omits considerations on sexual orientation, sexuality as well as race/ethnicity and skin color[103], which have not been thoroughly assessed in expatriate studies related to cross-cultural adjustment/adaptation. Liao also confirms that there

> is very little information relating to expatriates' marital status in cross-cultural studies. However, a number of studies have shown that the cross-cultural adjustment of family and spouse has a considerable effect on […] expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment (Tung, 1982; Harvey, 1985; Black, 1988; Black and Stephens, 1989; Black, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991; Naumann, 1992) (Liao 2010: 38)

For this reason, the present study constitutes a valuable contribution to knowledge on expatriate ethnic/racial differentiation, and on the stakes of gender, sexual orientation, sexuality and marital/relationship status, on subjective processes of cross-cultural adjustment/ adaptation.

A recent study on local-expat relationships within a postcolonial, French corporate organization in Singapore, and involving the application of Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power, confirms that cultural habituses are deeply entrenched in the way assertiveness and submission is perceived and deployed within managerial ranks. (Hui Lin Lee, 2013) In as much as cross-cultural adjustment/adaptation is concerned, it is most

[103] There is a growing body of literature on expatriates' negotiation of whiteness and white privilege in postcolonial receiving contexts, (Cook 2005, 2007; Fechter & Walsh, 2010; Leonard 2010a, 2010b) but a focus on whiteness alone is problematic because it whitewashes the ethnic/racial plurality of the Western world and the growing diversification of Western expatriate populations around the world.

fundamental to recognize 'cultural identity' as relatively embodied, but also as permeable to cross-cultural relations/exposure, as negotiated contextually with different groups of reference, and as transformative, especially through self-reflexive practice. (Kim, 1994)

> Through face-to-face or mediated forms of communication, intercultural interfaces often present a multitude of challenges, including those that force people to confront and re-assess their own identity as well as the taken-for-granted practices of thinking, feeling, and acting associated with the identity. (Kim, 1994: 10)

Kim's work however informative on the possibility of transformative cross-cultural relations/communication, does not explore how markers of differentiation are implicated in the notion of cultural identity, or how these might be involved in the transformation of cultural habituses. Drawing from work on Taiwanese expatriate workers, Chang (2009)

> found that cultural shocks help enhance expatriate workers' awareness of their existing schemas. In addition, through mental tension, mental dialogue, and information regarding culturally relevant others, cross-cultural workers gradually modify their perspectives and interpretative frameworks to adapt to local situations in a different culture. (57)

As such, cross-cultural encounters are relevant in cross-cultural adjustment/adaptation processes. Though with a view to expatriation, the notion of adjustment/adaptation must be expanded to include the entire process of relocation and the subjective experiences that emanate from daily life abroad. Expatriate adaptation is a bigger problematic, which includes negotiations involving multiple transitions and aspects of positionality and dispositions, along with the material, infra(structural), cultural, politico-economic, and environmental conditions afforded within various fields of practice/relation.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the few studies that exist on expats in Vietnam. In a case study involving a multinational NGO and expatriate managers, Zhu and Purnell

(2007) reported that expatriate respondents experienced "personal difficulties […] with living in Vietnam, […] based on language barriers, cross-cultural conflict, and separation from family members. These personal difficulties led to feelings of frustration and sadness."(539) Expatriate respondents were mandated to conciliate the Western and religious values and culture of the NGO they worked for, with the structural and cultural conditions of the Vietnamese context, in order to negotiate the located interests of the organization, and of government and community stakeholders. Power relations between expats and Vietnamese are barely skimmed, while markers of differentiations as well as adjustment/adaptation were not mentioned. Wang and Hsiao (2002) for their part, examined the case of Chinese professionals in Taiwanese firms established in Vietnam, confirming that a Taiwanese education is valued in the firms' employment decisions.[104] While this study identifies education as a potential factor of distinction, it does not relate this to cross-cultural adaptation, focusing instead on Taiwanese corporate hiring practices. Another study, this time in the field of law and criminology, discusses comparative fear of crime experienced for Australians in their homeland and in Vietnam. Results indicated that generally Australians, after a period of adjustment (which is not defined or described) were less fearful of crime in Ho Chi Minh City compared to other cities in Australia. Explanations for this were linked to a lower exposure to crime-related news coverage in Vietnam, avoidance behavior (adaptation strategies) entailing being

[104] This article is fraught with conceptual and theoretical weaknesses. For example, while the title reads "Social capital or human capital? Professionals in overseas Taiwanese firms," none of the subsequent discussions differentiate social and human forms of capital, and the very term 'human capital' is not even mentionned in the article. The authors also misuse the concept of social capital in reference to education, whereas knowledge, academic competencies, cultural literacy and educational credentials are conceived as cultural capital, since the concept of social capital is reserve to speak of social connections, networks and relations, which which carry symbolic value, and which may be used as forms of leverage.

accompanied almost everywhere, and using the services of locals (guards, drivers, maids, interpreters, etc.) and habituation towards different kinds of incivilities (traffic, corruption, public sanitation/hygiene practices, noise, etc.). (Coyne & Bell, 2012)[105] In short this study confirms that expatriate adaptation/adjustment involve avoidance strategies a well as habituation.

One of the most accessible source on Vietnam as a receiving context for expats, covering common cross-cultural tensions and adaptive challenges, is Ashwill and Thai Gnoc Diep's (2005) *Vietnam Today—A Guide to a Nation at a Crossroads*, which is presented as a guidebook, and not as an empirical research. More to the point on the experiences of a specific contingent of expats, Carruthers' (2002) study of Viet Kieu in Vietnam, identifies their dual Western-Vietnamese dispositions and positionality as valuable forms of transnational cultural capital, particularly as mediators between Western manager and local staff. This is effectively one of the few studies that targets a specific marker of differentiation, while heeding located adaptive subjectivities:

> Like the Viet Kieu of which I speak, I have experienced my own struggle to assert membership and legitimacy in Vietnamese sociocultural worlds by striving for performative mastery of the Vietnamese language and other cultural and bodily codes. I have experienced incivility and exclusion, as well as the sometimes unwanted, sometimes seductive social power that Whiteness confers in Vietnam, and I have had to find personal and public strategies for dealing with these contradictory and sometimes distressing experiences. (425)

Carruthers distinguishes between objective citizenship as status and subjective citizenship as embodied and performative realities, pointing to adaptive and often strategic forms of

[105] This research notes that 3 women and 3 men were interviewed although no distinctions accounted for gender in the authors' analysis or discussion of results. No other potential marker of distinction were mentioned.

negotiations. While adaptation is not central to Carruthers' conceptual and theoretical effort, she does provide a compelling discussion on the link between Viet-Kieu differentiation and their adaptive negotiations in Vietnam. Aside from these principal sources on expatriates in Vietnam, contributions that go further in identifying markers of differentiation while conceptualizing subjective adaptation are few and far between. This research clearly meets a need in terms of conceptual/theoretical advancement, and in terms of thematic orientation.

3.2-. Conceptual considerations on the West

In circumscribing who expats are, and in targeting English-speaking expats in Vietnam, the dialectic of the Occident and Orient surfaces, not only in the semantic and conceptual necessity to clarify what is meant here when I use these terms, but also in considering how the West might serve as an overarching and generic point/frame of reference for expatriates from otherwise very diverse national cultural and ethnic/racial backgrounds. Moreover, in identifying national cultural origins and ethnicity/race as markers of distinction, the intent of this chapter is to discuss how they influence social dynamics within the context of the expat community in Vietnam, and not to lend false legitimacy to the constructs, ideologies, categories and schemes of perceptions that sustain the politico-cultural meanings that are inscribed in the denominations of nation-states and formal citizenship affiliations.

> Despite a continuing and pervasive discourse on globalization and the disappearance of the state, we live in a world of increasing nation-states (Mann, 1993:1997). Their existence forms what Bourdieu terms a doxa: un-questioned background assumptions of social analysis. The

> fundamental problem, then, for any sociology of migration is to analyze immigration [or migration flows more generally] without simply using the nation-state as the frame of reference, and without uncritically or unwittingly deploying the nation state's own categories, schemes of perception, ideology and organizing principles (Abrams, 1988; Bourdieu, 1994; Corrigan & Sayer, 1985). The former tendency was diagnosed by Elias (1978) but has more recently been referred to as 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer Glick-Schiller, 2002). (Loyal, 2009: 420)

As such, it may be useful in this introductory section of Chapter 3, to consider how expatriates in Vietnam are being accounted for through mainstream statistics, why the West can be conceived as a 'common denominator', and finally, how homogeneity/heterogeneity within the expat community in Vietnam might be configured on the basis of national, cultural and racial/ethnic markers of distinction. As such, the following discussion clarifies why/how factors of distinction related to national origins, cultural affiliations and race/ethnicity may affect forms/practices of belonging.

As noted previously, the number of expatriates in Vietnam is difficult to estimate because of current shortfalls related to statistical compilation and reporting in the field of visa, work permit and residency permit administration. The government of Vietnam does not systematically seek to include foreign workers and temporary or permanent residents in its census surveys, so census statistics do not provide data on expatriates living in Vietnam. As a case in point, the 2009 census results, published by the Vietnamese Government Statistics Office (GSO) in 2010, estimated the total national population at 85,846,997 people, and the number of foreigners living in Vietnam at a mere 2,134. (GSO, 2010 [2009]) This figure is likely to represent the number of 'illegal' and 'stateless' Cambodian refugees that were naturalized in July of 2010 (See Chapter 2, Footnote 76). Alternatively, reports citing data from the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and

Social Affairs (MOLISA) and other sources vary widely, despite the fact that they all point to a significant increase in the number of expats working in Vietnam between 2008 and 2011. For 2008, an article in the Vietnam Investment Review suggested that "[a]ccording to [the] Molisa's initial calculations, about 40,000 expatriates were working in Vietnam." (Lien Huong, 2008) A year later, a 2009 article by Laurent Quistrebert (2009) in the March issue of *Mobility* states that in 2009, Vietnam counted "about 100,000 expatriates who [… were] living mainly in the two main cities, Ho Chi Minh City and the capital, Hanoi." (Quistrebert, 2009: 36) Another source from the real estate sector reported a figure of 75,000 for 2009.[106] (VCA & Associates, [no date]) Two years later, another source reported that the MOLISA estimated the number of 'foreign workers' (holding work permits) in 2011, at 74,000 (Investment & Trade Promotion Center HCMC, 2011). Needless to say that discrepancies can be identified at the level of data reliability. Also, MOLISA data does not include Viet Kieu expatriates because they are not required to obtain visas or work permits, or other expatriates who are in irregular occupational situations (retirees, volunteers, interns, accompanying spouses, expatriate children, 'local hires' working under the table without a work permit, etc.).

Adjacently, Vietnamese authorities are keen to compile and publicize tourism-related data, which also increase from year to year. The number of international tourists was estimated at 2,930,000 in 2004 and at a record-high of 5 million in 2010. (VOV News, 2011) These high achievements in the field of tourism may also indicate a policy

[106] VCA & Associates estimates that there are about "75,000 foreigners working and living in big cities […]. One of their essential needs when coming to Vietnam is a stable residence […]. [Par.] Now, Hanoi City has over 15,300 foreigners, [and] Ho Chi Minh City has more than 50,000 […]." (VCA & Associates, [no date]).

or administrative flaw, insofar as many expatriates may be counted as tourists or visitors, rather than residents. Between 2008 and 2010, Vietnam tightened its visa policies by limiting the validity period of business visas from six to three months, and restricting the number of legal renewals for tourist visas to a single one and doubling the cost of renewals. For a number of expatriates who had been renewing their visas every six months without leaving the country, this meant having to start doing regular visa runs to Thailand, Laos, or Cambodia (by bus or via low cost airline) in order to obtain new, but shorter-term visas. Hence, these expatriate flows 'in' and 'out' of Vietnam would easily be counted as part of the tourist inflow. Another source confirms that tourism statistics are likely to be flawed. "According to government estimates, Vietnam sees 3.3m tourist arrivals each year. This number might be inflated by the sort of old-fashioned processing methods that can count even a foreign resident's visa run as a tourist arrival." (H.C., 2010) In sum, national statistics on tourism may include residents who are avoiding the tedious formalities of obtaining a work permit and residency papers.

> Accessing accurate statistics in Vietnam remains a major challenge. The main sources of statistics on migration into Vietnam include: 1) the Immigration Department of the Ministry of Public Security; 2) the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs; 3) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; 4) international sources such as the International Organization of Migration and the World Bank. The General Statistics Office of Vietnam has not conducted censuses or surveys on international migration in the past. [Although the 2009 census did included some questions on international migration, it fell short of reaching foreign residents. …] The Immigration Department under the direction of the Ministry of Public Security holds important information on immigration and emigration statistics in Vietnam, but access to this information remains very difficult and is not open to the public. (Trang Nguyen & Vu Thi Hai Anh, 2010: 5)

Ultimately, the lack of information about foreign residents in Vietnam is a serious hurdle to understanding how fast the expatriate community is growing. Moreover, despite the fact that expatriates are encouraged to register with their embassy and/or consulate office while living in Vietnam, many choose not to do so. Adjacently, embassies and consulates do not generally compile and keep up-to-date comprehensive datasets on their expatriate nationals, but if they do, they don't generally make their records publicly available due to privacy laws.

A 2009 report published by the ministry of labor in Vietnam announced that the working foreign population was composed of 74% Asian expatriates, with a majority of Chinese and Taiwanese nationals, 21% European expatriates and 5% 'from elsewhere'. (Vietnam Ministry of Labour, War Invalids, and Social Affairs, 2009) Based on this information, it is unclear whether expatriates from the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were 'included' in the proportion of 'European foreign workers' or if they are counted in the remaining 5%. It is likely that the concept of "European" in these statistics refers to Occidental or Western origin, within a relatively bipolar conception of the world, because the term "Tây" in Vietnamese is commonly used as a blanket term to refer to Western foreigners. It is likely that Europeans, North Americans and Australasian are clumped together, under this 'Western denomination'.

The Vietnamese government published adjusted data for 2010-2011, declaring that "[a]bout 58 percent of foreign workers are Asian, while Europeans account for 28.5 percent." (Investment & Trade Promotion Center HCMC, 2011) Again, it is still unclear whether non-European Westerners are included in the proportion of European foreign

workers, or if they are included in the remaining 13.5% of expatriates, along with citizens from Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. An important point of contention however is that the tendency to simplify results on the basis of Asian versus European origins (with all Others in a separate category), underscores old assumptions about the world order and the construction of a world simplistically divided between the Orient and the Occident –though these represent relatively ambiguous regional and ethno-cultural references with roots in colonial conceptions.

My own usage of dialectic terminology such as Western/non-Western serves primarily as a didactic technique, which allows me to speak of an overarching group of people and a cluster of nations that are bound by geopolitical, socio-cultural and historically inscribed ethno-demographic ties formed between European nations and the countries that were formed through the emancipation of settlement colonies (rather than exploitation colonies) in the Americas and Anglo-Saxon Oceania. My usage of the 'West' acknowledges that this represented and imagined 'West' is also internally divided, with nation groups and ethno-cultural cohorts engaged in various forms of Othering, and serving as markers of differentiation between and amongst members of Western nation state societies. I also concede that this constructed 'West' is populated by a huge diversity of peoples/diasporas, many of which have non-Western origins.

Like Gramsci, I propose to conceive of the 'West' as a locus of hegemonic and hegemonizing developments entailing specific forms of 'civil order' that were irrevocably founded on the tenets of the enlightenment, entailing multi-party democratic and secular governance, structured by liberal constitutional principles and the application

of the rule of law in order to protect individual rights related to private property, freedom of thought and religion, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of movement. Of course, these tenets are supported by formalized capitalist market economies and neoliberal trade/finance. Summarily and at first glance, there are key differences between Western civil arrangements and the structure of Vietnamese society, not just as a result of differential development rates, but more importantly, emanating from the articulation and substance of cultural and politico-economic values and organization. Essentially, binary notions such as West/East, North/South, First/Third world, the Occident/Orient, although extremely simplistic and erroneously un-nuanced, are instructive insofar as they offer broad insights into models of representation, reflecting predominant constructs associated with population groups, social spaces and competing/different systems of ideas, norms and practices.

The 'West' for Stuart Hall is also "an image or a set of images [that] condenses a number of characteristics into one picture. […It] provides a standard or model of comparison. […] It helps to explain *difference*." (Hall, 1996: 186 [Original emphasis]) Hall (1986 and 1992) as well as others (Said, 1994 [1978] and Bhabha, 2007 [1994] for example) would probably argue that the West-East dialectic should not be understood literally, but rather as a key reference that corresponds to ostensibly de-territorialized constructs or representation of general Others. The West is deracinated in terms of location (place), but is still and perhaps increasingly rooted in those 'typical' Western values and systems of practice, embodied at the micro level as politico-cultural identities and, at the macro level, as institutional conventions.

Clearly, my using such simplified dichotomies (West-East, North-South or First-Third world) does not assume a naiveté vis-à-vis the existence of social spaces that bring one side of the duality into the other. So that the First world may exist within the Third world or in that the West is also present in the East, and vise versa. Indeed, seemingly clear-cut categories do not adequately account for the ambiguities, intersections and transformations of cultural frames of reference, modes of representation and/or markers of identification. Certainly, current phenomena such as the worldwide dissemination of mainstream media, advances in telecommunication and networking, the development of transportation infrastructures, as well as the acceleration of transnational flows (of material, information, people, and money), are contributing to the globalization of cultures in ways that challenge any attempt at locating culture, or the West for that matter.

Indeed, my usage of these terms is meant to clarify and demonstrate that cultures transcend spaces, that they are diffused, embodied, practiced, endorsed and that they meet and collide through the cross-cultural encounters of social actors. Concurrently, I do not use these terms in order to minimize the complexity and fluidity of cultural subjectivities. The use of dialectic terminology must be understood in the context of transnationalism[107], which opens the door to the possibilities of developing and cultivating hybrid identities or integrating forms of multicultural, multinational syncretism. (Bhabha, 2007 [1994]) In this context, my using a 'cluster' denomination such as 'Western' is not meant to dismiss

[107] For Bauböck (2003) "[t]he very definition of transnationalism refers therefore to states as bounded political entities whose borders are crossed by flows of people, money or information and are spanned by social networks, organizations or fields." (Bauböck, 2003: 701)

the complex interweaving of cultures and cultural identities, including the forms of appropriations, modulations, negotiations that produce a hybrid consciousness in individuals/collectives that straddle multiple cultures throughout their life.[108]

It is important to also acknowledge that these 'general categories' and dichotomous concepts are often derived from the historical dominance of cultures over others (Shohat & Stam, 1994) and developed to 'circumscribe boundaries', 'signify belonging' and 'justify forms/practices of Othering'. And this is especially relevant to the case of Western-Vietnamese relations as demonstrated in Chapter 2 but also in Chapter 6. Furthermore, I should emphasize that I do not use such categories with the intent to typify expatriates in a deterministic or essentialist manner or in ways that assume an inherent mutual exclusiveness between cohorts of expatriates or the existence of an intrinsic bond amongst them. Therefore, when I refer to Western expatriates as a cohort, I concede that it is a multi-cultural and multi-national category[109] that is divided by multiple subsets of crosscutting differences[110], but argue that it is sufficiently cogent thanks to the features of

[108] In fact, the very nature of transnationalism requires an analysis of the negotiations of plural and crosscutting ethnic and national memberships and of emergent possibilities for ethno-cultural hybridity (creolization, métissage, syncretism, etc.).

[109] Indeed, we should not minimize "the continuing significance of the nation-state as a repository of language, national cultures an state centred [sic] projects, a mediator of transnational migration and global networks through public policies, and a maker of political alliances and regulatory frameworks seeking to govern global trade, investment and production." (Smith, 2005: 237)

[110] "Having said this, it is still worth keeping in mind some salient differences between 'then' and 'now'. First, the scope and complexity of transnational relations appear more extensive now than in past historical periods. Greater access to the means of maintaining contact across space is widespread geographically […] and also is spread widely across national social-class structures. […Thus modern] mobility [… entails] more complicated pattern[s] of migration and (un/re)settlement of migrants and transmigrants, immigrant and refugees across nation-states than ever before. Contemporary transnational migration is highly differentiated by class, gender, generation, region, religion, and political and economic circumstance of migration within the same migration 'nationality', even within a single transnational city." (Smith, 2005: 239)

their transnational lifestyle and the residual effects of the conditioning they have undergone as part of a Western upbringing.

Braziel and Mannur's (2003) suggest that "[t]ransnationalism may be defined as the flow of people, ideas, goods and capital across national territories in a way that *undermines nationality and nationalism* as discrete categories of identification, economic organization, and political constitution." (Braziel & Mannur, 2003: 8 [Emphasis added]) While I agree that transnationalism entails such flows, these transfers do not necessarily undermine nationality and nationalism, even if they adjacently encourage the negotiation of continental or cultural affinities beyond the nation. In fact, the information generated through this research suggests that transnationalism speaks to the negotiation of new terms of engagement or 'attachments' to nation forms, particularly in relation to 'expatriate identities', the (re)production of institutional structures overseas, and the consumption of materialities born of national cultural industries. In these processes, deeply engrained dispositions that are a part of the habitus are mobilized, as these reflect distinct worldviews, preferences, internalized forms of belonging, that take on a particular significance specifically in relation to national cultures.

Therefore assuming that transnationalism 'undermines' or 'challenges' the nation state or nation forms as a key axis of identification and interaction, or as a focus of national political mobilization would be overstating its scope and misconstruing its significance. (Portes et al. 1999; Portes, 2001) Rather, the transnational connections that allow these transfers to occur on a global scale depend in part on the recognition of the distinctive character of nations –accounting for, but also going beyond the geopolitical

boundaries that circumscribe polity– and on the idea that nationality or nationhood actually matters –at least subjectively– despite the fact that national cultural identities are layered and contextually negotiated, insofar as national ties and vested interest in nations (spaces, peoples, political economies and cultures) are not conceived as mutually exclusive.

In fact, respondent testimonies often include self-referencing practices, which are helpful in identifying the cultural roots of their dispositions. In many cases, expatriates explicitly refer both: their national cultural background, and to the 'West', as overlapping frames of reference when discussing their encounters with Vietnamese ways of doing and thinking. However, I also concur that "being Western" does not preclude the possibility of being simultaneously non-Western, as in the case of people with hybrid Western-Asian subjectivities, especially for Viet Kieu respondents. In such cases, national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds rooted in both Asian/Vietnamese and Western ethos may serve as competing and/or 'syncretic' frames of reference. Therefore speaking of a Western habitus refers specifically to the effects of Western structural and cultural conditioning on social actors, without precluding the overlapping influence of other frames of reference (national cultural) and markers of social position (racial/ethnic, among others) that characterize their specific social position and dispositions. Subjective experiences therefore emanate from the negotiation of such differences and similarities, within the context of personal/social dispositions.

Throughout this thesis, I use terms such as the 'West', 'Western nation states', Western culture(s), Western world, Westerners, etc. as a referential toolkit that speaks to

the construction of the 'West' and the formation of 'occidental subjectivities', notably as these take material form mainly through practices, discourse, forms of representation, patterns of self- and collective-identification, and through the reliance on a seemingly common or shared frames of reference. As such, expatriate respondents deploy these, in reference to their objectivated reality. In turn, the 'West' and 'Western-ness' are also produced and reproduced through boundary maintenance activities, entailing forms of Othering that are embedded in the way groups of Others are constructed/perceived/ represented with their differences (rather than similarities) –at the fore.

Although this research ultimately included English-speaking expatriates of all nationalities, it was initially designed to focus primarily on Western expatriates including Western Viet Kieu. A focus on the West was initially meant to understand the experience of migrants who come from highly developed occidental nations and who are accustomed to operating within 'modern Western societies', and within the dominant systems of norms and values that are prevalent within and/or across Western national cultures. However, there are clear methodological and conceptual difficulties in identifying Westerners as research subjects, especially if we are to avoid 'excluding' actors on the basis of specific racial/ethnic and/or cultural origins. The sampling and the formulation of the call for participation were intended to include Amerasians, Eurasians, and anyone else that had dual or triple ethno-cultural and national affiliations, 'third-culture' individuals, or those that nurtures multi-cultural or multi-ethnic forms of belongings. Though without adequate data on the national affiliations of expatriates, it is difficult to assess how

diverse these communities are becoming, and whether 'Western transnationalism' represents a predominant frame of reference amongst expatriates in Vietnam.

Survey respondents (N=300) reported having formal citizenship ties to a total of 35 different countries (including multiple citizenship affiliations)[111], with origins from a total of 53 different countries (according to parents' origin and country of birth).[112] A proportion of 9.7% of respondents reported having multiple citizenship[113], and/or permanent residency in a different foreign country (other than their country of nationality and other than Vietnam), denoting the potential 'multi-culturality' of a relatively significant proportion of expatriates in the sample. Considering that citizenship[114] can serve as a form of cultural capital, it is interesting to note that close to a tenth of expatriates surveyed have the incumbent 'privilege' of having dual citizenship, and that all of those who had dual citizenship were affiliated to at least one Western country

[111] Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Cuba. Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, the USA, and the UK (including England, Scotland and Welsh)

[112] As Footnote 111, plus Bosnia, the Caribbean (Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad), China (Mainland), Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo Colombia-DRC), Fiji, Jamaica, Hong Kong, Korea, Malawi, Papua New Guinea, Romania, Thailand, Vietnam, Yemen, Zaire, Zimbabwe

[113] Citizenship can be conceived as symbolic capital in that the 'value' assigned to a formal citizenship affiliation modulates certain privileges, notably the terms of global mobility, the value of one's educational credentials and work experiences, not to mention one's 'membership' into a national community. "Citizenship as a culturally produced category manifests itself in formal (legal and institutional) as well as informal (practiced and cultural) forms. [Like Bauder (2008)] I suggest that both aspects of citizenship function as a form of capital and a mechanism of distinction." (Bauder, 2008: 316) Formal and informal citizenship also imparts social and cultural capital, by virtue of the connections imparted by 'national networks of social relations' and of the cultural knowledge/familiarity that agents within those networks share. For example, dual/triple citizenship affiliation underscores the ability of expatriates to negotiate their membership to more than one 'imagined' national community (Anderson, 1991 [1983]), thus providing access to greater social connectivity and incumbent opportunities; not to mention the ability to 'understand' the values, norms and frames of reference of two/three communities of belonging.

[114] Although I discuss national cultural markers of distinction, in terms of their potential influence on the experience of expatriates, I do not delve into the literature on citizenship (e.g. transnational citizenship, postcolonial citizenship), as this is beyond the scope of this study.

(either U.S.A., Canada, European Union countries, Australia and New Zealand). Including dual/triple citizenship affiliations, but excluding permanent residency permit holders, the distribution of expatriates (from N=300 responses) for the countries most represented in this sample of expatriates in Vietnam can be summarized as follows: Australia 15.3%; Canada 10.7%; France 10.3%; Germany 9%; Netherlands 6%; UK 13.3% and USA 20%. Together, these proportions represent a total of 84.6% of surveyed expatriates. As such, 59.3% of surveyed participants had citizenship affiliations to Australia, Canada, the UK, and/or the USA (filtered data excluding duplicates for dual citizenship). This is crucial in understanding why an Anglo-Saxon sub-culture seems to be pervasive in the configuration of Western expatriate social relations in Vietnam.

Conversely, respondents with at least one EU citizenship (according to 2011 EU membership) account for 52% of the sample. If we include current EU countries[115], Western Anglo-Saxon North America (USA and Canada), and Western-Australasia (Australia and New Zealand) into a conception of the Western world, then 91% of survey respondents are affiliated through formal citizenship to at least one Western world nation. Although these numbers cannot be said to represent the actual distribution of the expatriate population in Vietnam, they hint nonetheless, at the constitution of an important expatriate contingent in Vietnam, while revealing that despite diversity in

[115] As of 2011, the EU included 27 nations, namely: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

national origins, respondents seem to be part of an expatriate community that is relatively exclusive given the dominant influence of an overarching Western subculture.[116]

Yet, national cultural identities, which are both 'personal' and 'collective', also serve as key markers of distinction as expatriates encounter Vietnamese nationals. In Vietnam, like elsewhere, one of the first question foreigners get asked is "where are you from?" And the usual and expected response refers to a national affiliation that is substantiated through formal or informal citizenship, and by the internalization of the constructs that give meaning to that membership. In conceptualizing nations as 'imagined communities', Benedict Anderson (1991 [1983])

> holds that nations are imagined, in that they are the result of shared perceptions among people who think of themselves as part of that community. Because most people in a nation will never see, let alone meet, one another, their bond is a social construction […]. Hutcheson et al. (2004), […] usefully conceptualize national identity as "a constructed and public national self-image based on membership in a political community as well as history, myths, symbols, language, and cultural norms commonly held by members of a nation' (p. 28, emphasis in original). (Coe & Neumann, 2011: 141)

For Vietnamese nationals, 'being Vietnamese' is to be a part of an 'imagined community' that has a deeply engrained collective consciousness, tightly woven in the fabric of national struggles for sovereignty and self definition, and intricately colored by the historical conditions that have shaped the country's international relations. As such, it makes sense that Vietnamese nationals are genuinely interested by 'where' expatriates come from. Essentially, they are likely to project the importance of national belonging as

[116] While the volume of research on Western expatriates is increasing, few scholars that have written on this topic look at the way the West is circumscribed and how Westerners are 'identified' as subjects. Certainly skin color or racial/ethnic differentiation or nationality, are not sufficient in themselves to establish whether a social actor is in effect a 'Westerner'.

a reflection of their own positionality in relation to foreigners, including Viet Kieu.[117] Concomitantly, national affiliation is also likely to draw on the represented and imagined value of nations. As such, one can conceive of a host of assumptions that substantiate judgments about various categories of expats. So that upon revealing my nationality to a Vietnamese, I was enthusiastically greeted with: "Oh so good! Canada number one!" Amongst expatriates, national identity markers are also reflected in the way they relate to one another, in the way assumptions about similarities and differences are expressed, and in the manner in which belonging is negotiated.

In social sciences, national markers are commonly used to study cohorts of migrants/expatriates because geopolitical boundaries serve not only as convenient denomination, but also because nationality is thought to signify both origins and belonging,[118] which often also underscores assumptions about the sharing of a cultural frame of reference. As such, a focus on formal citizenship alone abstracts people's true sense of origins and their relative sense of belonging, while assuming that everyone within a specific nation state adheres to the same cultural norms. However, national

[117] Anderson (1991 [1983]) views national culture primarily as a composite of the ideologies and practices, which sustain the shared commitments of people who, sometimes unknowing of each other, form an imagined community bound to a national apparatus, a territory, and/or an ancestral origin/heritage. Within this framework, it is clear that 'being Vietnamese' for Western Viet Kieu can be founded on the conception of 'belonging' to a global imagined ethno-cultural community that transcends the notion of formal citizenship, and despite differences in the cultural constitution of Vietnamese diaspora communities around the world.

[118] We should not undermine the fact that people may nurture forms belonging that link them to multiple ethno-cultural and national groups simultaneously. In a stricter sense, members of national communities that are bound up by a state apparatus, are likely to share a common knowledge of, and a belief in the myths, programs and orientations of their (nation-state) society or national group of reference. (Hobsbawm, 1992 [1990]) National and ethno-cultural identities are always socially constructed, personally and collectively internalized, contextually performed and negotiated relatively flexibly over a person's lifetime. Through socialization, cultural and national markers of differentiation are internalized and incorporated as part of habitus.

identity is also a key starting point in the analysis of migrant experiences because expatriates' national cultural identities are reflected in patterns of practice, and in the articulation of transnational ties/attachments – generally as a manifestation of doxa.

Finally, because we conceive of a "plural West" or rather a construction of the West that takes into account the diversity within, we must also acknowledge that the West cannot be reduced to constructs of ethnicity or race, or to the embodiment of whiteness and its privileges. As such, the West and therefore Westerners have to be understood through the subjectivities that are produced by ethnic/racial differences, by the located experiences that skin color differentiation imparts as a result of enduring inequalities and prejudices. Western expatriate communities have the potential to be "organically diverse" thanks to the diversity that is born of immigration into Western countries, and "reborn" out of Western transnationalism. Though this does not mean that all Westerners experience expatriation in the same way, notably based on intersecting distinctions that influence how they relate to each other, on the basis of national cultural belonging and formal/informal forms of citizenship, and how they are treated by host country nationals, taking into account the risks of racial marginalization but also the relative privileges and disadvantages that skin color imparts in the receiving context. Ethnicity and race thus, also serve as factors of distinction that influence expatriates' experiences abroad.[119]

[119] For example, white and black expatriates who are settled in Vietnam are always inevitably recognized as foreigners, and regularly treated as tourists outside of their familiar social circles. One respondent attesting to this reported that: "always being treated like a tourist when you've been living here for years is tiring."

As such, respondents were also asked to identify their ethnic/racial denomination. The format of an open-ended question was chosen in order to avoid pigeon-holing respondents into categories they would not be comfortable with. On N=300 respondents, 6.3% chose to skip this question, 56.7% self-identified as white or Caucasian, while 24.7% of respondents self-identified as a national, continental or linguistic subcategory that is typically associated with Caucasians, such as British, German, Dutch, Italian, Norwegian, Slav, Australian, New Zealander, European, Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Hispanic, etc. So people that are likely to be perceived as belonging to 'white Western societies' comprise 81.4% of the sample. Though here, no assumptions can be made on the actual delineation of skin color or ethnic/racial origins of those who self-identified as one of those subcategories. However, by accounting for skin color, we can highlight the potential marginality of non-white expats. Only 3% self-identified as either Amerasian or Eurasian and 7.3% as Asian or a subcategory typically associated to Asians (using national, linguistics and cultural denominators) such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Javanese, Filipino, etc. Furthermore, there are those who explicitly self-identified to subcategories associated to Indian cultural, linguistic and national markers of distinction, such as Tamil, Dravidian, Indo-Aryan[120] (1%) and those who self identified to a category designating as black such as African American, negro or black (1%). Ethnic and racial denomination is important because skin color and related characteristics serve as factors of distinction (markers of differentiation), which are likely to influence the experience of expatriates through the confluence of local and global dynamics regarding

[120] Note here the use of Dravidian and Indo-Aryan, as the residual use of racial categories established under British colonialism.

the value of whiteness, the conspicuousness of Asian-ness and the pervasiveness of black prejudice.

3.3-. Racial/ethnic and skin color differentiation: Negotiating Otherness

Considering the diversity of the expatriate population in Vietnam, survey results suggest that despite variations in national origins, 'Western culture' remains prevalent as a shared frame of reference within the expatriate community in Vietnam. So a great majority of expatriates relate to each other on the basis of familiar cultural referents and practices, despite differences in ethnic/racial origins. However, underlying these differences and the subdivision of expatriate communities into national cultural cohorts, ethnic and racial differences cannot be ignored as another "layer" of distinction because it affects expatriates' experience within the receiving context. As a starting point in the analysis of cross-cultural relations, the issue of skin color differentiation is important because it speaks to the negotiation of relative privileges and disadvantages associated with prejudice and forms of judgments by others. It is often assumed that cosmopolitanism and the advantages of a transnational lifestyle, which Western expatriates often enjoy, also underscore the privilege of whiteness.

> Molz nous rappelle toutefois que pour se sentir citoyen du monde, partout chez soi, le sujet doit souvent le faire au détriment des autres, dans un acte de souveraineté rappelant la violente histoire coloniale : « Indeed, these travelers' claim to mobility-as-home and to the world-as-home is heavily inflected with colonial overtones of access, entitlement, and appropriation of places and cultures. » (Molz, 2008 : 336). Un cosmopolitisme qui est en fait un privilège blanc, possible grâce à des conditions matérielles et sociohistoriques : «By making themselves chez soi in this global abode, travelers enact a form of mutual belonging in which they belong to the

> world and the world belongs to them.» (Molz, 2008 : 339)[121] (Giguère, 2009: 348)

Taking ethnic/racial diversity into account, such assumptions denote an underlying disregard for the subjective realities of Western expats who are not white, and for the intersection of race, class and cultural capital in the negotiation of relative privileges and disadvantages. In the case of expatriates in Vietnam, and despite the fact that whiteness is symbolically rewarded, Western-ness may be performed and class/status distinctions may be deployed to counteract the ethnic/racial marginalization.

During my fieldwork in Vietnam, I noticed the importance of skin color, realizing that expats with different ethnic/racial characteristics might have distinct experiences based on their skin color, notably in terms of the negotiation of their social position. In preparation for my focus group session on 'Ethnicity and nationality: skin color differentiation', I made contact with expats of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds, some were introduced to me, while I met others randomly in social or public venues. The choice of participants aimed at representing diversity, to gain insight on a wide range of experiences. This focus group session was meant to explore how social positions based on these markers of distinction are linked to subjective experiences, highlighting various degrees of awareness as well as degrees of sensibility about the configuration of discrimination and the articulation of stereotypes. While expatriates with mixed but ambiguous ethnic/racial origins largely escaped marginalization, white and black

[121] "Molz reminds us that in order to feel like a world citizen, everywhere at home, the subject often does this at the detriment of others, in an act of sovereignty reminiscent of a violent colonial history […] (Molz, 2008: 336). A cosmopolitanism that is in fact a white privilege, possible thanks to material and sociohistorical conditions […] (Molz, 2008: 339)" (My translation of Giguère, 2009: 348)

expatriates reported being singled out in specific ways. Generally whiteness is rather favored and it may be that the 'closest to white, the better' from the stand point of both status and privilege, as well as aesthetic preferences, as Tino (a focus group participant) experienced despite language barriers:

> Tino [Hispanic man, middle age from South America]: […] I am almost white, just with a good tan [laugh] so I am not different than other white expatriates. [… It is] only my accent [in English], the Vietnamese don't understand me so much. […]

Regarding his relative whiteness, Tino exclaimed "Same, same, but different" a popular expression in Southeast Asia, notably in neighboring Thailand and Cambodia, used to compare things/differences that have relatively equal symbolic value. Therefore Hispanic "tanned" expatriates may be perceived as fitting the criteria of whiteness.

Meanwhile it also seems that class and status (related to professional position) along with other factors of distinction tend to intersect with skin color differentiation, thereby attenuating the risk of marginalization.

> Harold [Mixed Eurasian/Middle Easterner, early thirties from Europe]: […] The staff at [work] are great. I have no problem with them. I consider that I am treated with courtesy generally. [Here, I represent my country,] so I'm careful to dress and act [… to get more] respect. […] People seem to [accept] my answer when I tell them I am from [respondent's country of citizenship -Europe] [...even though] I am originally from [country in the Middle East] but the average Vietnamese would probably not know where it is, so it doesn't matter. […] I receive more questions about [what I eat] and […] my religion [the respondent reported being Muslim]. […]

For many Vietnamese, Harold's racial/ethnic origin is unusual and difficult to distinguish, so he found himself on the outer cusp of racial/ethnic ascription. He was able to negotiate status-based privileges by virtue of his professional denomination, and found that what seems to intrigue host country nationals revolved around his religion and

incumbent diet. In the focus group session, Harold explained that because he could not get Halal meats in most places, he ate vegetarian food and occasionally fish. He also noted that a Vietnamese reporter once approached him to learn more about the sparse Muslim community in Hanoi and on the uses of an old downtown pagoda as a mosque. For Harold, his religious distinction created a deterrent to questions about his ethnic/racial origins. Although he mentioned that other expats often asked him "where are you really from?" in order to uncover his ethnic/racial origins and get beyond his European nationality; hence, the need of Western expats to locate Other expats, beyond their citizenship, and more specifically in terms of constructs that tend to categorize origins. This is interesting because Harold's Middle Eastern appearance is detected as a clue by Western expats, who in turn perceive him as an Other Westerner within the expatriate community.

Status, class, gender, along with other constructs that are conceived as factors of distinction (such as occupation and religion) produce located subjectivities that intersect with skin color differentiation; and expats may choose to nurture social connections at the interstices of these layered markers of difference, thereby avoiding marginalization.

> Lisbett [Afro-Asian woman, middle age from North America]: […] I get a lot of questions [from acquaintances] about where I come from because of my unusual features […but once I tell them] it does not seem to be a problem. […] I have not experienced any discrimination, not directly anyhow. […] My circle of friends are mostly from my social club and I don't associate with many people outside our network.

Lisbett is scarcely confronted to ethnic/racial prejudice or stereotypes, as her appearance and ethnic/racial denomination is also ambiguous and highly unusual. With her copper skin tone, almond slanted eyes and tightly curled hair, Lisbett's appearance, like that of

Harold, defies ascription. Ultimately, it is the mixed expat community and the middle upper class women from her international social club that constitute a buffer against the risk of being singled out. Lisbett benefits from a high status and privileged economic means, enabling her to patron rather exclusive venues/shops/restaurants that cater to the elite (foreigners and Vietnamese); thereby implying that her social position entails positive discrimination or special treatment that would effectively counteract any potential for ethnic/racial marginalization.

Adjacently, the experience of black expatriates stands in contrast, as they are highly visible, easily singled out and more readily marginalized due to prejudice.

> Charlotte [black woman, early 20s from North America]: Oh, the kids in the street stare at me [a lot…]. Sometimes people point and stare. I [… had problems] in a couple of restaurants when I was on my own [… and] I feel like people talk about me in the street. But I was warned [and] I knew that this might happen. […] I have a really good support system with my host family. The mom is great […] She treats me like one of her own […] My host family sister explained that there's just so much prejudice against black people and so little exposure to people of other races, she even thinks its backward so it's not everyone [who's racist]. Some of her friends really wanted to meet me and we've become friends […]. At work too, my colleagues [other expats and Vietnamese] are fabulous, really supportive […]. […] One time] I was on my way home […] and a little boy from my neighborhood came running to me from behind and when he reached me he took my hand as he said [hello…], and then he looked at his hand to see if my color had spread [respondent gestures to her palm]. [laugh] It was awkward but I smiled and leaned over to let him touch my hair too…

Charlotte explains clearly how her ethnic/racial origins and skin color serve as factors of distinction in the Vietnamese receiving context. In public she effectively attracts attention and is aware of the prejudice that people hold against black people. Her subjective

experience confirms that she was singled out as a result of stereotypes and assumptions regarding her race.

> Charlotte: When I visited Hoi An, the hotel clerk greeted me with the usual 'Hello, How are you? Where are you from? How old are you? Are you married?' and then she said 'you are so dark but you are beautiful' and she said it like she was so surprised [laugh] […].

In Vietnam, especially in the centre and north of the country, the lack of exposure to ethno-racial diversity (beyond the 54 indigenous ethnic groups that are recognized by the government of Vietnam) is partly to blame for people's general attitude. Unlike cosmopolitan cities in the Western world where there is a rich racial diversity, and where the presence of ethnic/racial minorities is normalized, in Vietnam, black people are still a relatively rare sight.

Indeed, expatriates who come to Vietnam are plunged into a unique receiving society, which is incredibly homogenous (ethno-culturally) but amazingly complex (politico-culturally). (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005) To be clear, although Vietnam is home to 54 ethnic groups, the ethnic 'Kinh' represent more than 85% of the national population and ethnic minorities are for the most part relegated to highland rural areas, where they face regional constraints on access to education, health care, economic development and trade, notwithstanding limitations on their residential mobility. (Zhang et al. 2006)[122] The Kinh majority occupies mainly lowland areas in the North (Red River Delta) and South (Mekong Delta) and constitutes most of the governing elite. (Ashwill &

[122] Ethnic Kinh constitute 85.7% on a total population of 85.85 Million. (GSO 2010 [2009]) As the dominant majority, they represent governing elites and steer the politico-economic structure of the nation. Other ethnic groups in Vietnam, include the Tay 2%, Thai 1.8%, Muong 1.5%, Khmer 1.5%, Hoa 1%, Nung 1.1%, Hmong 1.2%, and others 4.2%. (GSO 2010 [2009])

Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005) Obviously, such ethno-cultural segregation points to the Kinh's ethno-cultural monopoly within most urban spaces, where Vietnamese nationals are likely to encounter and work with foreigners. In this context, expatriates' skin color differentiation serve as the basis of 'first-glance' judgments, factors of distinction that might make them highly visible based on a gamut of constructs and ideas about 'categories of foreigners'.

Though it is also the construction of whiteness that carries symbolic value by virtue of its association with notions of beauty, in contrast to blackness or dark skin and related social constructs. Being dark or black, *and* beautiful is thus easily conceived as something of an oxymoron. In the case of Charlotte, being at the receiving end of prejudice and stereotype related to her skin color and race did not deter her appreciation of the local people, thanks to a strong support network that acted as buffer against isolation and exclusion. Charlotte did not dramatize her experience and she remained gracious in her assessment of the Vietnamese who articulated racial judgments around her. As a conjuncture, Charlotte may have been advantaged by her gender, which may have helped Vietnamese see her as less suspicious and threatening than a black man would have been. Her mild mannered and realistic disposition helped her cope, though she was aware and well prepared for it. However, skin color may also influence expats' professional prospects in Vietnam, though much will depend on their attitude and the forms of capital they might mobilize in order to get additional leverage.

> I'm sorry to say it, but white is definitely best. White skin will get you a job teaching English in Vietnam, all by itself. I've seen scruffy, untrained, inexperienced, non-native English speakers get a job- their white skin was their only qualification. Blacks can do okay but unfortunately they have

> gotten a bad reputation in Vietnam. The government recently deported a few hundred Nigerians; quite a few have been arrested on drug charges. I once met a nice, handsome, young African teacher who I found out was arrested a couple of weeks later for smuggling Ecstacy [sic] into Vietnam from Cambodia. Many Vietnamese people are afraid of black people. But don't worry, you can still do fine, just be aware of some of the prejudices that you may run into. (David, 2009)

For those expatriates who are either white or black, their high visibility may prompt differing forms of marginalization, leading to risks that reify insider/outsider cultural politics.

> Lex [white, middle aged man from North America]: I've not experienced [negative] discrimination that I can link to the fact that I am white. If anything I'm targeted as a foreigner and almost all Vietnamese think I'm made of money… but that's because I'm American… I think being white is an advantage. I get a lot of "you so handsome man" [respondent performs feminine mannerisms and tone of voice] and that's […] flattering as long as they don't get too close and try to steal my wallet … [Lex was referring to a known scam involving flirtatious women pick pocketing foreign men] […]

White expatriates are often the subjects of preferential treatment, not only because they are assumed to be of a relatively high status, but also because they are conceived as attractive or good-looking. In Lex's case, positive feedback regarding his looks was counter-balanced by the fact that many Vietnamese base their judgment of white foreigners on assumptions about their economic means, and as a result of their outsider status it is understood they are easy targets for theft/pick-pocketing.

The issue surrounding whiteness in Vietnam is one that finds its roots in Annamite and traditional Vietnamese hierarchical structures and in Western colonialism. The value of whiteness, notably its relationship to status, is still deeply internalized as a key dimension of the Vietnamese habitus. Even today, Vietnamese men but especially

Illustrations: Vietnamese women covering their skin to remain as fair as possible.
Source: Facebook photos posted by Anemi Wick. (Wick, 2012)
*Photos reproduced with permission.

women go to great lengths to stay as fair as possible: covering their feet, legs, arms, hands, necks and faces from the sun, even in the scorching summer heat. "Young women driving motorbikes may appear to be making a fashion statement by wearing gloves and covering their arms. In fact, they are trying to avoid getting a suntan in a society that values light over dark skin, because the latter is equated with working in the fields from dawn to dusk." (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005: 32) Moreover, the astounding range of whitening products available in Vietnamese grocery stores is a testament to this social phenomenon, from body creams to deodorants, from talcum powders to dangerous chemical peeling formulas.

As discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, the concept of habitus can be used to refer to both (or either) individual and (or) collective dispositions. This is important because individual and collective dispositions towards whiteness or towards people of a particular race/ethnic background may differ. Whereby collective prejudice and assumptions may pervade public life, producing hegemonic racial dynamics and influencing individual attitudes, while some social actors who have benefited from greater exposure to black

people (such as Charlotte's host family and the friends who wanted to meet her) may engage in reflexive process that will help them reject dominant stereotypes and develop more accepting and welcoming attitudes.

It is in this sense that black people in Vietnam are still susceptible to both collective and individual prejudice: "it seems Blacks get shunned no matter where they go, it's kind of sad really." (HoustonWok, Nov. 18th 2009 in David, 2009) As such, white and black expatriates are likely to have very different experiences in Vietnam. Black expatriates are at a clear disadvantage compared to other cohorts of expatriates, and this is unfortunate as it speaks to prevailing Vietnamese dispositions towards the Other and to enduring forms of racism within Vietnamese society. In an interview, Shauna, a black woman from North America, stated "It's challenging when you are the source of humor for the Vietnamese people. I find that people point and stare, and laugh at me when I walk down the street. […] It could be my skin color or my size … or both, … it's rude but I'm used to it… [smirk] that's sad don't you think?…" Though Shauna refers as her size (height and weight) as an added concern, the issue of skin color is of fundamental importance in the analysis of expatriates perceptions and experience of challenges. To be at the receiving end of "pointing," "staring" and "laughing" is undoubtedly difficult and Shauna's testimony confirms what other black expats may experience on a common basis. Shauna admitted that this situation made her feel awful and that it wouldn't be long before she would leave Vietnam, taking "the good and the bad as learning experiences."

Indeed black expatriates may be shunned by some Vietnamese nationals or be the subject of racial slurs, notably due to widespread racial prejudices. In an interview, a black respondent who was living in Hanoi at the time reflected on his experience:

> Larson [black man late 20s from Europe]: I tried to make local friends, but it's hard […] in the street [Vietnamese] people point and laugh, [Pause …] It's upsetting! I'm constantly aware of how different I look. […] It's a little different at work because my students are curious and respectful of me but I really just socialize with other expats. […] I didn't ask, but I believe [some Vietnamese] are ashamed to be seen with me in public […].
> Interviewer: So would you say that you are experiencing racism?
> Larson: Yes absolutely! [Pause] Being called a monkey and feeling ridiculed because of my skin color is not particularly pleasant. But it's not like that with expats or Vietnamese people I work with. It's mainly in the street or in Vietnamese businesses, [Pause] mmmh, especially when I'm alone. People aren't as obviously racist when I'm with other expats or at work. […] Vietnamese people think white skin is beautiful so white expats have an advantage I think. […] I have a few students who asked if they could touch my hair; that was fine. I can appreciate their curiosity. […]

Larson's case confirms again that race and class intersect, whereby he feels disadvantaged on racial grounds, while incurring privileges on the basis of class and his professional status. As such, Larson's testimony confirms that being a teacher, a position well-regarded in Vietnamese society, affords respect in the workplace, although racial typecasting occurs in public where his status is unknown. Thanks to his connections within the expat community, Larson mitigated the risk of isolation, but not the incumbent challenges of racism at the hand of host country nationals. In this sense his adaptation to Vietnamese culture is hindered by prevailing forms of racism, which force him to find refuge within the expat community. His subjective experience as an outsider is therefore defined through intersecting layers of distinction that are at play to various degrees in different fields of practice/relations.

In Vietnam, whiteness and blackness and the degrees in between ought to be examined as per their aesthetic and class/status significance, including, but going beyond, the discourse on racial/ethnic differentiation. Skin color discrimination and related prejudices in Vietnam have not been studied despite their common occurrence. While, there is a growing and important scholarship on expatriates and whiteness within a postcolonial perspective (Cook, 2005, 2007; Leonard, 2008, 2010a; Fechter & Walsh, 2010), the experience of privileged black expatriates in Asia should not be neglected.

Meanwhile, Asian, Amerasian and Eurasian expatriates may be less conspicuous as they navigate public settings, at least until they are required to 'speak', which may lead to differential treatment on the basis of their fluency in Vietnamese. Leo's survey testimony illustrates well such situations: "Although I can pass for a Vietnamese national, the price of anything I buy increases once I open my mouth and am identified as a foreigner." Expatriates with 'Southeast Asian' characteristics may feel like they more easily blend in within the Vietnamese receiving context, as they may not 'stand out' to the same extent as white or black expats. Notably, they are also less likely to be the subject of 'at-first-glance-judgments', though they may not be able to sustain social interactions with Vietnamese without eliciting the recognition of their foreignness. Even Viet Kieu are susceptible to this: "Domestic Vietnamese have an extremely finely honed capacity to spot a nonnational [sic], who is identifiable by the tiniest departure from locally constituted codes of dress, deportment, speech, and so on." (Carruthers, 2002: 431)

Advantages and disadvantages must be negotiated differently between fields, whereas a Viet Kieu can be disadvantaged in some contexts and privileged in others. Testimonies drawn from a popular expat-teacher forum remarked key differences attributable to the construction of race/ethnicity in Vietnam.

> Let's look at a few variables that may affect a school's decision in hiring you:
> The color of your skin.
> [Par.] Asians have a harder time. It's a little too close to home. Parents want to see foreigners teaching their kids. [… Par.] The color of your skin is more important [that being a native English speaker]. [… As for Viet Kieu, it's b]iggetry at it's finest, nothing like being prejudice against your own kind. [… Par.] Overseas Vietnamese have a really tough time. It may be hard to find a job, and you may have to accept lower pay. Even if you were born in the USA, don't speak Vietnamese, and never came to Vietnam before, it's all about appearance. If you do speak Vietnamese, don't let the school know! Pretend you don't understand a word. I have heard the staff of a school directly say to an overseas-Vietnamese English teacher: "Please don't speak Vietnamese at all in the school. Don't let students or especially parents know that you speak any Vietnamese." (David, 2009)

Race/Ethnicity along with origins, nationality and linguistic proficiency, are therefore markers of distinction that affect, not only the configuration of privileges and disadvantages but also, more precisely, the negotiation of power dynamics in social relations, in public and at work. Marcus, another focus group respondent confirmed that his Vietnamese origins impart an unusual balance of privileges and disadvantages.

> Marcus [European Viet Kieu man, mid-thirties]: […] the main inconvenience for me is negotiating for a better salary with employers. Just because I am Vietnamese, employers want to pay me less than my expat colleagues. This is so frustrating. I am not even born here. I didn't grow up here. [… Also] I think the parents [of my students] sometimes dismiss me because I am Viet Kieu. I have more qualifications and teaching experience than many of my colleagues but they are more respected I think because they're white. […]

Conversely, Marcus also explained that he doesn't "get hassled as much as foreign-looking foreigners" and even with limited Vietnamese fluency he can more easily get around situations where most expats are likely to be overcharged or scammed. Meanwhile, in a corporate context, some Viet Kieu can be distinctly advantaged by virtue of their presumed/actual transnational cultural capital, being asked to mediate relations between other Western expats and local stakeholders (government officials, community representatives, clients, etc.); thus, despite the

> difficulties of interconversion between fields. The historical and ideological disjunctures between overseas and domestic Vietnamese populations are such that any "transnational sociocultural intelligibility" that exists between home and diaspora is a fractured one at best. (Carruthers, 2002: 428)

Viet Kieu adaptability will then rest on their capacity to deploy their cultural capital and their ability to negotiate their multifaceted positionality and dispositions in various fields.

The racial/ethnic diversity that is part and parcel of the growing influx of expatriates in Vietnam corresponds to a relatively new phenomenon that has yet to be systematically studied. Although racial/ethnic differences do not seem to act as barriers amongst expatriates, skin color and racial/ethnic characteristics do influence cross-cultural relations between expatriates and Vietnamese nationals. Concomitantly, other factors of distinction related to age, class, profession, as well as gender, marital/relationship status can intersect with race/ethnicity, with compounding effects that will influence how expats are treated in different fields of practice/relations. It is fundamental to conceptualize the Western expat community in Vietnam as racially/ethnically diverse and to avoid generalizations regarding the "assumed

whiteness" of Westerners. Finally, of utmost importance here, is the subjective experience of marginalization, of difference, and the negotiation of race/ethnicity and skin color as part of adaptive practices.

3.4-. Western transnationalism, connections and connectivity: Survey results

Survey results suggest that a significant proportion of expatriates within the sample maintain meaningful transnational bonds with one or more countries, with family members, friends and colleagues around the world, and this may entail connections to their country of racial/ethnic origin, their country or countries of citizenship, or other countries where they may have vested material, financial and/or family/social interests.[123]

> Distance and boundaries, are not what they used to be. […] Mostly, we are not yet into interplanetary connections. But this is a time when transnational connections are becoming increasingly varied and pervasive, with large or small implications for human life and culture. People move about across national boundary lines for different reasons […]. The technologies of mobility [and connectivity] have changed, and a growing range of media reach [sic] across boarders to make claims on our senses [and decision making processes]. Our imagination has no difficulty with what happens to be far away. On the contrary, it can often feed on distances, and on the many ways in which the distance can suddenly be close. (Hannerz, 1996: 3-4)

Today more than ever, we notice the confluence of connections and connectivity, in the form of transnational practices, forms of bonds and ties that link expats to their homeland, countries of citizenship, countries of origin, and all the other places where they've been and have friends and family. For many expats, living and working overseas

[123] "When referring to sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders – businesses, non-government-organizations, and individuals sharing the same interests (by way of criteria such as religious beliefs, common cultural and geographic origins) – we can differentiate these as 'transnational' practices and groups […]" (Vertovec, 2009: 3)

means leaving a family home or property assets behind. In fact, survey results suggest that it may be relatively common for Western expats in Vietnam to have a residence somewhere else. On N=300 responses, 49% of respondents reported having a place of residence outside Vietnam. On N=147 (the number of respondents who specified the location of their home outside Vietnam –Question 15), including responses from respondents who had homes in more than one country, 14.3% stated having a residence in Australia, 8.8% in Canada, 6.8% in the UK, 6.8% in the Netherlands, 9.5% in Germany, 10.2% in France, and 17% in the U.S.A. Also, on N=147 responses, 9.5% of respondents reported having a residence in two or more countries other than Vietnam, denoting the truly multinational background of a large proportion of expatriates in the sample.

From a different angle, on N=147, including those with other residences elsewhere outside Vietnam, but avoiding any double counts in the case of expatriates that had residences in two or more countries in one continental region, 19.7% of respondents reported having a residence in Western Australasia (Australia, New Zealand), compared to 24.5% in North America (Canada, USA), 44.2% in Europe, and 12.2% in Asia (other that Vietnam). Only 4% (of N=147) had a residence in Africa, South America, and/or the Middle East. These results demonstrate that a large proportion of expats in Vietnam, especially Westerners, maintain an attachment to a place of residence overseas, and with it, the implicit possibilities of 'returning home' eventually (through repatriation) or regularly (through punctual visits). It may even speak to the negotiation of belonging, and to a sense of security that is nurtured through the idea that one "*has a place*" there (a place to go to, a place to visit, a place to call home, a place to return to). Such

attachments speak to practices of place making, underlying the needs, feelings and assumptions that come with "being away" from home, from "that place" that is so familiar.

On N=292 (the number of respondents who provided an answer to Question 19), 40.8% reported owning or co-owning property or real estate outside Vietnam. In addition, 61% of N=292 (the number of responses received for Question 18) reported owning material assets in a country other than Vietnam. These transnational ties reflect not only expatriates' sustained bond with their 'homeland(s)' but also their material, financial and property-related connections, thus denoting their cosmopolitan lifestyle. Ownership of landed property or material assets can be conceived as a tangible bond that underscores on-going responsibilities. While real estate can be used by family members or rented out, personal possessions left-behind (in 'storage' or in the care of friends and family) are more specifically symbolic of 'an in-between'. It is as if belongings are a token of the past, now 'waiting' for the expat to return looking for continuity, or for a decision to be made about where to settle, so that these can be shipped to a new home, or just to allow enough time to pass so that old material possessions may lose their symbolic value, and become 'things to get rid of'. In this sense, leaving things behind with the intention to one-day deal with them, speaks to a deep attachment to the material and to what it symbolizes as a source of continuity.

Meanwhile, from a more practical vantage point, a majority of respondents (70.5% on N=295 responses for Question 17) stated using a permanent address in a country other than Vietnam. The use of a permanent address can be conceived as a buffer

against the inconvenience of global transience, especially if this entails successive expatriations or regular travel to specific locations. Changing one's address is a relatively complex endeavor, considering the range of stakeholders that should be contacted, the formalities that must be complied with, and the paperwork that it might entail. As such, 'moving around' and 'living overseas' is likely to incur administrative hurdles, whether it pertains to the management of income and property taxes, banking, driving licenses, pensions, home and car insurance, health care coverage and entitlements, etc. Within the context of business and government relations, it seems institutions/organizations are not yet adapted to the complexities of transnational living; so many expats use the addresses of kin and/or friends as a point of contact, as a way to manage their incoming 'formal correspondence'.

The transnational ties of expatriates take the shape of important relationships, which are also sustained through mobility practices and degrees of connectivity. As such survey respondents were asked a series of questions to gauge the quality of their transnational relations, and the frequency of their exchanges with family and friends overseas. In response to the statement "Your relationships with friends and family overseas are strong and supportive…" N=287 respondents logged their answers on a four-point scale and the great majority (63.4%) answered 'Yes absolutely', compared to 27.2% stating 'Yes somewhat', while only 8.7% and 0.7% answered 'Not really' and 'Not at all' respectively.[124] This data indicates that most expatriates nurture meaningful bonds with family and friends overseas, and that these transnational relations substantiate

[124] Cross-tabulations showed no major variances based on gender as a potential intervening variable.

certain forms of attachments and multilateral exchanges (communication, mail, travel, financial transfers, etc.). Adjacently, N=290 respondents used the five-point scale to describe the frequency of their contacts with family and friends: 28.3% reported being in contact 'Very often' and 49.7% said 'Regularly', compared to 17.9% who answered 'Once in a while', 4.1% 'Rarely' and 0% 'Never'. It is interesting here to note that the conditions imposed by distance, do not hinder the ability of expatriates to nurture meaningful and supportive transnational relationships, and that the frequency of contact with family and friends overseas is rather high for the great majority of respondents. Adaptation imperatives underscore generally the necessity for expatriates to find ways to continue nurturing their bonds with family and friends overseas. This curtails the risk of isolation, as an outlet for frustrations related to experiences of culture shock, while allowing expatriates to maintain a degree of continuity in their social roles despite the distance that separates them from their family and friends. In fact, practices that enhance the quality of expatriates' relationship with family and friends overseas are also pivotal in enhancing life satisfaction in general.

Survey results also suggest that a significant majority of expatriates tend to rely on modern telecommunications and information technology in the maintenance of their transnational relationships. On N=291 responses received for Question 72, 82.5% indicated using social networking websites and Internet telecommunications. Question 73 asked respondents: which social networking sites or telecommunications tools they used. On N=256 responses, 31.3% indicated using Skype and 76.2% reported using Facebook; thus, despite the fact that Facebook has been largely blocked in Vietnam in recent

years.[125] In rating the importance of email communications and online social networking on a five-point scale, 56% (on N=293 responses) reported these were 'Crucial', 31.4% said these were 'Very important', compared to 9.9% and 2.7% who reported that these were 'Relatively important' and 'Not really important' (respectively). No one chose the option 'Not important at all'. The use of these technologies in the maintenance of transnational relations is a distinct feature of 21st century migrant connectivity and expatriates in Vietnam mobilize these means, precisely to fulfill the need to nurture substantive relations with people in their homeland and beyond, as a means to stay in touch with the people they meet throughout their transnational trajectories.

> Facebook is blocked in Vietnam this has been an issue for a while, but there are always ways around the block. […] I am totally addicted to Facebook, it simplifies my life to no end!
>
> Thanks to Skype my kids can speak to their grandparents in [Europe]. And now when we visit they recognize them!
>
> I've been through a difficult period, adjusting to life here, and facebooking makes me feel like I'm connected to my network of friends. I get instant support and I feel like Im [sic] still important in there [sic] life.
>
> [Responses to Survey Question 74 – Open-ended section]

The reality of expatriates' reliance and even dependence on the Internet to nurture transnational ties is a relatively new phenomenon. In fact, with new telecommunications technologies such as Voip, Skype, Facetime, texting (sms), file and photo sharing

[125] Facebook is considered a public platform that enables social mobilization and forms of association, which are not sanctioned by the Government of Vietnam. As such, Facebook has been largely blocked across the country. However, expatriates often find solutions to this barrier, connecting to Facebook through proxies. More recently, the Vietnamese government has allowed the use of social networks under the condition that only personal information is shared. Decree 72, which has been sign in July 2013 and which is set to come into effect in September of that same year, clarifies new restrictions relating to how such media should be used. (See Chapter 2, Footnote 88 and 89)

systems such as Flickr, Media Fire, Drop Box, Rapid Share, Instagram, etc., as well as online profile interfaces such as Blogs, Facebook, My space, Tweeter, Linked-In and even expat online networks such as Inter-Nation and Allo-Expat among others, transnational relationships are now easier, faster and cheaper to maintain than ever before. This represents an area of research that shows great promise, not only to gain a better understanding of expatriates' transnational communication practices, but also to understand how these tools shape personal, professional and other social relations, and how they impact the lives of migrants and expatriates, notably those who are highly mobile throughout portions of their life. Based on testimonies, these tools sometimes are crucial in alleviating anxieties and frustrations, in dampening isolation and loneliness, and in strengthening bonds within families, networks of friends and communities of interest regardless of the distance that separates users. Finally, these very means of communication and information exchange allow expatriates to stay connected with home, in ways that offer meaning to their personal and social life. The attachment expatriates have towards their 'home-land', is not only substantiated by national identities and their underlying frame of reference, or by the cultural preferences that have been integrated to habitus as a result of socializing experiences, or by the property and financial ties that bind actors to the institutions of their countries of citizenship. Rather, testimonies reveal that transnational attachments are nurtured through personal connections, the content of exchanges, the meaning of relationships, and the act of sharing as a premise for interaction.

> Facebook is great because I get to see the local news my friends are looking at back home and I can choose to read them and to participate in the discussions they start off at my convenience.
>
> With Skype video I let my dad see our house here in Vietnam. I gave him a tour and he was quite chuffed to have a better idea of how I live.
>
> Since I'm far away I miss out on family reunions but I call with Skype and my parents line up the whole family around the computer to take family pictures with my face right there on the screen, beside my brothers and sister. It's like being there… almost! Then my father sends me the pictures by email or he'll post them on Facebook.
>
> [Responses to Survey Question 74 – Open-ended section]

For some, the accessibility of telecommunications and information technologies seems to have become a critical factor in the decision to live and work overseas, or in the quality of life they are able to achieve while overseas. In the last comment above, the respondent specifies how a variety of platforms are used complementarily, whereby Skype, Email and Facebook may be used together, within a system of practices that includes video calling, sending pictures and posting these pictures online and sharing them with a larger network of connections. It becomes evident that expatriates rely on these technologies as a means to maintain important social bonds.

> If it wasn't for the Internet, and how easy [sic] I can reach my family back home, I wouldn't be here.
>
> [Response to Survey Question 74 – Open-ended section]

Transnational relations are taking on new forms thanks to new technologies that allow the sharing of content in a multitude of formats, as well as real-time exchanges that enhance social bonding and cohesion. And it is now becoming evident that for some, these technologies serve as an impetus towards migration. Thus, contributing to the

diversification of the expatriate population, whereby people who in the past may not have been inclined to leave their homeland by fear of loosing access to their social support network, may now consider expatriation a viable life choice, and transnationalism a workable lifestyle.

Respondents' input suggest that these means of telecommunications allow actors to nurture and take part in meaningful social exchanges: to participate in debates about homeland news within a social circle, to allow others 'back home' to take part in one's life overseas, and to be a part of family reunions 'back home' despite the distance. It follows that the use of telecommunications and the practices that sustain transnational relations serve to meet important social needs that go beyond the fostering of national identities. Indeed, the process of adaptation may also include important transnational networking strategies, which constitute ways of securing and maintaining forms of symbolic capital (for ex: family cohesion or collective solidarity), ways of establishing role continuity, as well as ways to curb isolation and enhance life satisfaction. More research would be required to establish how information and communication technologies are used, notably in relation to 'habitus maintenance' and 'social role continuity'.

These findings underscore a need for more research on the way expatriates use telecommunication technologies, and on their impacts, potential and limitations in the process of migrant adaptation. Until now, much of the research on the uses of information and telecommunication technologies by migrants has been focused on diaspora communities in the Western world and on the ways they affect opportunities for

migration and their outcomes, along with their implications for remittance flows. (Schapendonk & Moppes, 2007; Kluzer et al., 2008; Hamel 2009) Though even within this vein, this remains an under researched topic.

> The extensive use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) constitutes a fairly new dimension in the study of migration and diasporic communities that has recently begun attracting the attention of scholars from a variety of disciplines and methodologies. This is still very much an under-researched area [… despite the fact that] the impact of technology on migration is undeniable. It facilitates the flow of people across the planet and the formation, growth and maintenance of diaspora communities and family ties. In particular, the personal computer, the cell phone and access to the Internet have become quotidian resources among migrants who use them to develop, maintain and recreate informal and formal transnational networks in both the physical and the digital worlds, while reinforcing and shaping their sense of individual and collective identity (Boyd 1989; Glick Schilleretal 1992; Haythornthwaite 2007; Horst and Miller 2006; Vertovec and Cohen 1999). (Oiarzabal and Reips, 2012: 1334)

Expatriates in Vietnam represent a highly computer literate population and their use of information and communication technologies seems directly related to both personal and professional uses, enabling business opportunities, access to homeland/worldwide news as well as host-country resources, internet shopping and banking, blog/forum interfacing, but also interpersonal connectivity with family, friends and associative networks around the world. In this sense, information and telecommunication technologies may now play a vital role in enhancing expatriates' quality of life. In fact expatriate network connectivity is an emerging feature of transnational social life, one that also allows expat communities in different countries or different regions to be connected to one another, while potentially promoting expat mobility between them. These uses point to interesting research avenues that ought to be explored in light of the results discussed above.

3.5-. Expatriate communities: Negotiated transnational belonging

Expatriates in Vietnam, like other migrant groups elsewhere, are known to create hubs of cultural activity, maintain their collective national identities and engage in practices that encourage boundary maintenance, giving rise to distinct transnational communities. Expatriate communities in Vietnam are fairly cohesive within specific regions or particular urban spaces. An interview respondent who has lived in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City explained that: "in Hanoi it's about 4 degrees of separation, if you don't know another expat personally, then you certainly should know someone who knows someone who knows the person you are talking about. […] In Ho Chi Minh City, it's about 5 or 6 degrees of separation." Another informant noted: "This is a small community. There's a high turnover of people every few years, but generally most long-term expats know each other." The shared experience of 'being foreign' in Vietnam, entails for most Westerners 'being part of a visible minority' that is readily identified as 'foreign'. Melody, a survey respondent, explains how this can generate strain in everyday life:

> Melody: It is a small community and we are so visible, people look at us, observe us, judge us [and] it is quite stressful, you feel like you can never let your guards down.

Indeed, most white and black expatriates stand out, and it is impossible to escape the 'at first glance' judgments of Vietnamese nationals towards 'foreigners'. Expatriates are likely to experience social encounters that are colored by stereotypes and incidents that stress their status as 'outsiders'. So they are likely to bond through their 'shared

experience' as outsiders, and through their assumed 'commonalities' in terms of cultural values, preferences and worldview, which stand in contrast to prevailing local norms.[126]

Amidst the significant flow of tourists, expatriates may even struggle to have their status as 'residents' socially recognized, as explained in this survey testimony: "I get so fed up of being treated like a tourist when I've been living here three years […]." Being treated like an outsider regardless of how long they've been living in Vietnam is an experience that many expatriates share due to the relatively homogenous ethnic constitution of Vietnamese society. In fact, part of the problem stems from the fact that inexperienced tourists may easily fall prey to scams, and be rather naïve as to the relative price of products or to local patterns of practice. So expatriates may experience frustration when having to negotiate related attitudes, which pin them along with 'newcomers'. Adjacently, with the increasing in-flow of expatriates into Vietnam, 'expatriate communities' are diversifying from the point of view of national and ethnic origin. For this reason, expatriates may foster layered forms of belonging, which highlight their membership as part of a local expatriate community and in some cases, as

[126] Within the English speaking expatriate community in Vietnam, dominant practices and lifestyles denote adherence to Western frames of reference; thus substantiating the use of the West and Westerners as a 'cluster' denomination. Expatriates in Vietnam largely relate to each other on the basis of cultural commonalities, which stand in stark contrast to the Vietnamese culture they must decode and contend with as foreigners. The circumstances of colonial presence around the world may have promoted similar cross-cultural dynamics, for example: "David Armitage (2000), argues that after the union of the Scottish and English crowns in 1707, a coherent notion of Britishness [emerged and spread] across the Atlantic, and was expressed most strongly first, away from the homeland. Abroad, the notion of Britishness was understood in terms of belonging to an empire, a British empire. The concepts which informed this notion of empire — that it was commercial, maritime, Protestant, and free— were also […] fundamental to the self-understanding of Britain as a nation, forged in warfare (Colley, 1992)." (Ho, 2004: 214) Ho (2004) adds that it was a time when "loyalties came to cluster around institutions, such as private property, free trade, Protestantism [or Christianity and/or Catholicism], a yeoman right to bear arms, equal access to law. While all this was seen as coming out of the tradition of the Freeborn Englishman, the elaboration of the tradition in this range of institutions ultimately served to deracinate it, and open up countries dominated by the British diaspora, such as the United States [and Canada and Australia], to Germans, Italians, and non-Europeans [in British colonies and commonwealth nations] as well, over time." (Ho, 2004: 215)

part of a distinct transnational cultural diaspora, which is growing and transplanting itself in Vietnam.

In this respect, survey and interview testimonies were highly informative, suggesting that national background constitutes an important 'layer of difference', which modulates expatriates' experiences. As such, 'national belonging', beyond the configuration of modern nation states, is (re)produced and expressed within the frame of layered and situational forms of identification (through subjective affiliation), which constitute fundamental dimensions of habitus. Here, we can conceive of national cultural habituses as being individual and/or collective, and as the product of conditioning or socialization in a corresponding national cultural milieu. This could refer to a region within the nation-state, a community, and/or a family that espouses the values and customs of that national culture. As such, a national cultural habitus is constituted by dispositions (preferences, predilections, assumptions, ways of thinking and doing) that are comparatively in line with hegemonic frames of reference that are predominant in that specific national cultural context, constructed and reproduced by collectives and internalized by individuals, thereby including the tacit knowledge of relevant rules and a relative awareness of the parameters of social order. Since national cultural habituses can overlap and compete (as negotiated forms of belonging), social actors may also be able to play-up or play-down certain aspects of their national cultural identity in context, thereby demonstrating that they are active agents in the performance of their social positionality, and in the mobilization of social, cultural and other symbolic forms of capital.

Within the process of adaptation, expatriates' attachment to their homeland may intensify, diminish, or change overtime, perhaps as a result of homesickness, nostalgia, the experience of culture shock while overseas, and the shared feelings that come with 'being foreign' in unfamiliar cultural settings, or rather as a result of acculturation in the receiving context, the development of compensating local bonds, habituation and re-socialization within the new culture. In the same time, albeit the diversity that is found within English-speaking expatriate communities (on the basis of nationality, ethnic origins, and 'micro' class distinctions[127]), expatriates are also bound by the shared and homogenizing experience of 'being foreigners' in Vietnam. On such bases, they share common frustrations, parallel needs, and often, similarities in their 'adaptive learning curve'. In turn, expatriates will also share the anecdotal stories, which typify their experiences of cross-cultural encounters locally, and others that exemplify their culture 'at home', these are in fact often the premise expat blog entries, expat chat room discussions and forums, and expat social club activities.

In a semi-structured interview, James, a British national and long-term resident of Vietnam shared the following:

> James [white European late thirties]: I'm happy that there are quite a few expats from the UK here. With others from Ireland, Australia and Canada, we are a tight group of friends. We share the same values and speak the same language with minor differences [… that we] tease each other about, you know?! [… And] we play [sports] regularly, […and] meet up at the pub for a beer to help relieve some stress and keep homesickness at bay.

[127] I refer to 'micro' class distinction to differentiate expatriates by virtue of their lifestyle and living standards. Although they may be perceived by most Vietnamese as being part of an upper class in relation to the masses, expatriate communities are divided from within, on the basis of class differences that denote the varied social positions they occupy by virtue of their occupational status and the transposition of conventional Western class stratification into the expatriate 'third culture' microcosm.

Clearly, cohorts of expatriates may form on the basis of perceived national-cultural similarities and together, expats with seemingly comparable backgrounds are likely to engage in activities that are integral to their adaptation process and quality of life, notably to thwart isolation and relieve homesickness. In a latter part of the interview, James also explained that when he, or one of his UK connections "go back home for a visit" they would often commission each other to bring back specific "brand name products" that are difficult to find in Vietnam. So these networks also serve a utilitarian purpose. From a symbolic understanding, these relationships sustain patterns of 'transnational cultural consumption' that are in line with the preferences and cultural identities of expatriates.

James speaks of having 'similar values' with particular expatriate contingents, thereby articulating the significance of a shared ideological viewpoint and cultural preferences in the establishment of stronger bonds between expatriates. He highlights the importance of *'speaking the same language'* not just in linguistic terms but also in terms of a shared frame of references. In turn, expatriates feel less isolated because they are connected to a national and multi-national community of peers with comparable worldviews and interests, others that 'understand' the semiotic and symbolic apparatus (or the system of signs and symbols) they are using as part of their vernacular exchanges, notwithstanding 'minor differences' that seems trivial in comparison to perceived 'dissonance' between dominant Western and Vietnamese habituses.[128]

[128] The idea of 'dominant Western and Vietnamese habituses' refers to pervasive social dispositions that reflect the collective internalization of cultural preferences, assumptions, forms of knowledge, habits, ways of thinking and acting, and which stand in contrast to other culturally hegemonic manners of being/thinking.

Expatriates in Vietnam, notably Westerners, while relating to one another on the basis of imagined/actual 'commonalities', form a relatively cohesive expatriate community, which can be associated to a particular subculture. Expatriates in Vietnam are likely to

> undergo socialization into a common and shared subculture which enables them to move easily among people of differing origins and backgrounds, including locals, who belong to their set or sub-set (cohort or sub-group of reference). This common sub-culture could, indeed, be called a 'third culture' […] extendable to the common sub-culture of nationals, of any number of countries, in a locality, who are members of a multinational set or sub-set. [Par.] However, though the 'third culture' concept is useful, one should bear in mind that it may also be misleading. First, the different national participants contribute to its creation in varying degrees: particularly, it is the foreigners, and if there are several groups of foreigners, the largest or most powerful group, who set the tone of the third culture; the hosts' contribution is often marginal. (Cohen, 1977: 64)

This may explain why Western culture in a generic sense seems to dominate as the cultural frame of reference of English-speaking expatriate communities in Vietnam; thus, despite the fact that expatriates represent diverse countries both within and outside what can be conceived as 'the Western world'. In this sense, it is crucial not to assume that the emergent 'Western habitus' of such expatriate communities is articulated as a clear cut division that pins the West against the rest (Hall, 1996), or as a manifestation of incommensurability between an imagined West, which can be compared to 'contrasting cultural forms' that might be thought to represent 'Asia'. (Nisbett, 2003) Essentially, expatriate communities in Vietnam are, for the most part, formed on the basis of a shared frame of reference, which extends to the articulation of values, norms, ideas about social order and civil society, as well as common interests and preferences (many of which are bound by class and socio-economic position/means).

Transnational belonging is negotiated on various fronts. Empirically observable commonalities between expatriates of different national backgrounds indicate that they 'relate to each other' as Westerners *and* as co-expatriates with a common national, continental or ethno-cultural origin, and/or on the level of language spoken, gender, age, occupation, social class, marital status and family circumstance, etc. Yet, in their relations with one another, and even within the first minutes upon meeting each other for the first time, expatriates often express a sense of shared affinities founded on the belief that actual/potential similarities based on social positionality are substantive markers that warrant their 'coming together'. As such, national cultural differences, which pertain to the embodiment of forms of nationhood through practice and forms of self-identification, emerge as a layer of distinction, which may 'standout' in some fields of social relations, but also overlap with other identity markers. For example, mother tongue (particularly other than English, since these are a minority within a minority), shared interest in 'homeland news' and food culture among other cultural practices/forms, work to create 'national cultural pockets/networks' within expatriate communities. In fact, certain 'markers of difference' may become more salient abroad, thus allowing national or international solidarities to emerge.

As such, some of the practices of expatriates in host societies may well serve to 'represent', and even transplant, certain components of their own national cultures. In this sense national cultural forms are (re)produced within the receiving context, and can no longer be 'located' within their respective geopolitical spaces. In this sense, expatriates are also 'trans-patriots', by virtue of their commitment to a particular 'national'

positionality (substantiated by formal and informal forms of citizenship), and to the practices that contribute to the reproduction and transplantation of their national cultural frame of reference. I suggest that within the framework of transnationalism and given the structural forces behind the global market economy, the (re)production and consumption of nation forms continue to be meaningful for social actors and collectives, even beyond geopolitical boundaries, especially because it contributes to expatriate and diaspora negotiations of transnational belonging. Namely, the relocation or transplantation of national cultural practices overseas allows expatriates to 'express' and 'foster' what they conceive as their *distinction,* and this is particularly important within expatriate (sub)communities, where the negotiation of national differentiation and cultural similarities sometime lead to their 'collapse' within a collectively constructed 'West'.

Within the framework of global trade and the internationalization of cultures, transnational ties are then sustained through local patterns of practice within a host society. For example, Irish, English and other Western expatriates, can 'indulge' in the consumption of an original Draught Guinness beer ('on tap') in what seems like a 'proper' Irish or British pub (albeit being co-owned, managed and staffed by Vietnamese nationals) in Vietnam. And this can happen in part thanks to transnational flows of merchandise and ideas. However, the willingness (read also desire/need) of British, Irish, and other Western expatriates (along with tourists) to consume such Western products at inflated prices is also of fundamental importance. Why? Essentially, going to a 'proper pub' and drinking this kind of draught beer specifically are practices that are embedded with symbolic value. These express an attachment to a specifically British and Irish

cultural frame of reference, one that might also extend its influence to Western commonwealth countries such as Australia and Canada, that have receive a large number of Irish immigrant and have been under heavy-handed British influence since colonization. It is in this context that the 'typical Western cultural consciousness' is likely to legitimize the notion that a traditional Irish draught or dry stout beer served on tap within the ambiance of a pub –complete with overhead television on the sports channel, pool table, Liverpool banners, Irish flags, and trimmed wood furniture– 'must/should/will' be better, than drinking a cheap canned Vietnamese beer on a low plastic stool on a busy and noisy street-corner Bia Hoi.[129] The Britishness or Irishness of the pub's appearance like the taste and aroma of the beer itself, matter to expatriates, for they reflect their internalized preferences, a comforting and familiar scene, that carries symbolic value. And while this example seems to unify Anglo-Saxon expatriates on the basis of a shared Commonwealth cultural frame of reference, negotiated differentiation across nationalities still occurs in different forms, because national *distinction* is subjectively articulated such as in the case of the expatriate who stated "*I'm not British, I'm English!*" during a participant observation sessions.

[129] Bia Hoi is a popular and successful chain of Vietnamese beer joints. Bia Hoi franchises (real and fake) proliferate across Vietnam. They generally serve 3 main brands of beer (Bia Hanoi, Halida and Tiger beer) and sometimes, limited Western import options such as Heineken. They are set up in rudimentary ways with plastic tables and stools that are the size of typical commercial children's 'tea set tables'. By Western standards, typical Bia Hoi tables and stools are close to miniature. The atmosphere in these establishments is quite particular. Customers may sit inside or outside as tables and stools are set up, right on the sidewalk, all the way to the edge of the street. This is great for 'people watching' but at rush hour, on a busy street, the noise, traffic and the smell of exhaust can become overwhelming and ruin one's R&R time. Prices are dirt cheap however, as a can of beer will cost between 5,000 and 10,000 Vietnam Dong (between $0.25 U.S. and $0.50 U.S.) Most of the clientele is composed of Vietnamese men, and it is likely that the staff will know only a few words of English.

In an effort to reach out to what seems like a relatively homogenous group of Western expatriates, Finnegan's Irish Pub Hanoi's website explicitly advertises its "*Delicious Western meals in a home away from home*" adding to their pitch: "If you feel you're missing home, Finnegan's Irish Pub is where you need to be." (Finnegan's Irish Pub 2010) And every year on March 17th, the pub is filled to capacity with Irish, British, Canadian, Australian and other expatriates and tourists sporting green shirts and face painting, happy to drink, many to excess, in celebration of Saint Patrick's Day. As a couple of tourists put it: "who says you can't celebrate St Patricks [sic] night in Vietnam with a load of scousers, Australians, Canadians, French, Norweigens [sic] and of course...the Irish!"[130] (Jo & Peter, 2010) Transnationalism[131] does not entail a dismissal of the importance of the nation, nationalism and nationhood; on the contrary, it implies that transfers, exchanges and mobility patterns between nations ensure the maintenance and expression of nation forms (beyond politics) outside the geopolitical boundaries of the conventional 'nation space'. In fact, like St-Patrick's day celebration, the symbolic

[130] A British couple touring Vietnam blogged about their experience at Finnegan's Irish Pub in Hanoi on Saint Patrick's day: "Finnegans […] had banners, balloons lined the doorways, flags, music and the bar was packed. […] Everyone was wearing a t-shirt bought from the bar with a leprechaun on the front and writing on the back saying "I got sh*tfaced at finnegans irish pub, Hanoi, Vietnam on St Particks day". […We sat] with a group of people all […] covered in facepaint. We [… tried the] jagermeister fountain [and we] were stopped […] by a tall lad who had a pot of paint. He used the lid to splatter paint all over us and then laughed and walked off. Well we were now in full Paddys night mode. […] I got speaking to an Irish girl named Rachel. She was very excited to be able to celebrate even though they weren't in Ireland. […] We walked up[stairs] and […] decide to stay [… there] for a bit as it was slightly quieter [… until] a group of scousers, norweigiens [sic] and Scotts came bounding in singing "John Arne rise, ooo arh..." everyone joined in and Peter was especially happy to be talking to more scousers. […] Good night all around, and who says you can't celebrate St Patricks [sic] night in Vietnam with a load of scousers, Australians, Canadians, French, Norweigens [sic] and of course...the Irish!" (Jo & Peter, 2010)

[131] Conceptualizations of transnationalism should seek "to avoid constructing yet another rigid binary between transnational cultural agency or translocal political practices and global economic (re)structuring. Just as there is no unitary canonical discourse in transnational studies, there is not a single globalization discourse. […] Furthermore, the burgeoning literature on the globalization of culture […] clearly show [sic] that globalization and transnationalism are both multidimensional social processes. (Appadurai, 1991; Loshitzky, 1996; Mandaville, 2001; Van der Veer, 2001)." (Smith, 2005: 236)

value attached to practices is also ritualized. It follows that Saint-Patrick's day, while being relatively insignificant in Asia or in Vietnam, is an event, which resonates across the West and within Western communities beyond the West, thereby mobilizing Western sensibilities beyond national divisions. This is also the sign that Vietnam has niches of multiculturalism and global cosmopolitanism.

Expatriates' transnational practices speak to nuanced articulations of national belonging that may intersect with other forms of cultural identities, and which are inherently embedded in practice. The concept of belonging

> emphasizes the materialization of expatriates identities in everyday practice. Firstly, then, the term belonging usefully connects with recent analysis of contemporary life that has emphasized embodied performance and practice. The concept of performativity has been widely taken up across the social sciences and humanities in exploration of identity and belonging (Nash 2000) and it has been argued that (trans)national forms of collective belonging and citizenship are articulated and reproduced through everyday practice (Bell, 1999; Joseph, 1999; Fortier, 2000; Edensor, 20002). (Walsh, 2006: 270)

It is in this sense that I conceive of expatriates' transnational identities as relatively developed, contextually performed, subjectively embodied, and also ascribed or attributed not only by one's own reference groups and Other reference groups, but also by macro-level institutional systems, all of which provide forms of legitimization about the terms of one's 'belonging'.

> Secondly, concepts of 'belonging' elicit the emotional register of identities, our geographies of the heart. For Probyn, the term "captures the desire for some sort of attachment, be it to other people, places, or modes of being, and the ways in which individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fuelled by yearning." (1996, 19) The emotional dimension of belonging was most talked about by expatriates in relation to their lived relationship […]. (Walsh, 2006: 270)

Expatriates' sense of belonging may be relatively negotiated based on a number of factors of distinction such as place of birth, formal/informal citizenship(s), race/ethnicity, parental/ancestral descent, personal trajectories, familial dynamics, etc. Though that are also bound to negotiate their sense of belonging through the transnational attachments and relationships they maintain, and through the connections they will establish in their receiving context. For expats, the negotiation of 'belonging' within the expat community may be vital to curb isolation, to nurture life satisfaction, and to foster a clear sense of self-affirmation. In turn, the expat community in Vietnam, because it is so connected and cohesive is likely to act as a 'cohort of belonging' or as a 'place of belonging', because expatriates tend to draw on their affinities, on their shared experiences as foreigners in Vietnam, but especially on their common frame of reference as Westerners.

Expatriates testimonies, also suggest that the West is a construct that makes sense to them, notably as they are likely to relate to one another on the basis of shared values, common practices, and convergent preferences that find their root in Western ways of life. In response to open-ended questions, survey respondents often used the terms West, Western world, or Westerners to contrast their own ways of being/thinking against those of host country nationals. As such, the West is a construct that unifies expatriates from Europe, North America and Australasia, in their awareness of cultural dissonance between them and Vietnamese nationals. Despite appreciating many aspects of the local culture, 9.3% of survey respondent (on N=270, the total number of respondents who answered open-ended questions number 47, 75 and 76) used terms like the West, Western, or Westerners in comparative statements highlighting the contrast they perceive

between their internalized national cultural habitus and the dominant cultural and politico-economic hegemony of Vietnam. A survey respondent emphasized this by stating: "[t]his place drives me fucking crazy, so it's good to have some balance to keep me in the Western loop!" Here, the language and semantic significance of this testimony reveals that cultural and politico-economic dissonances can have challenging effects on habitus: effects that may even perturb element of the psyche. In fact, the underlying emotional significance of this statement reifies this respondent's attachment the Western ways of being/thinking, as a matter of personal well-being and sanity. Accordingly, as adaptation strategies, actors may seek out opportunities to establish and nurture a 'Western comfort zone' through their daily practices.

While the manifestation of a Western culture within expatriate communities seems to enhance cohesion between expatriates from Western countries, it is also apparent that national belonging and citizenship affiliations serve as a layer of *distinction*, which may in some case, impart cultural and social capital among 'distinct' national cohorts. Important expatriate contingents in Vietnam are also relying on 'their own institutions' as a means to foster national belonging, to mobilize resources in their day-to-day life and work activities, to meet their emerging needs and to ride the wave of rapid development within the Vietnamese political economy. For example National Chambers of Commerce are key players in developing networks of co-nationals with converging and intersecting business and financial interests. Moreover, some embassies are very proactive in fostering national pride and belonging, providing fully equipped resource centers, a regular schedule of activities and meeting opportunities for their expatriates,

and the public at large. The U.S. embassy in Hanoi and the consulate in Ho Chi Minh City run two American Centers, one in each city. These centers offer weekly activity programs that include English language improvement opportunities (aimed at Vietnamese), debate sessions, games, film showings, thematic presentations and speaker series, live music, fundraising events, commemoration ceremonies, and much more. They also allow the general public free access to their libraries, which offer an extensive range of social, cultural, economic and political information on the U.S.A., in the form of fiction and non-fiction books, databases, periodicals, magazines, DVDs, etc. as well as internet access. The American Centre also marks special events like the 4th of July, thanks giving, Christmas, etc. with parties and galas. In fact, the 'American community spirit' was at an all time high at the moment of, and following, Obama's first presidential election. The American expatriate community buzzed with so much enthusiasm, denoting clear interest and engagement in homeland politics.

Similarly the French embassy in Hanoi sponsors L'Espace a well-known cultural center among Francophiles. Also known as l'Institut Français de Hanoi, it offers a lively activity program including debate sessions, film showings, performance arts, and French language supports, along with access to a fully equipped library and media center. L'Espace also serves as a meeting place on those 'special days' such as the Bastille (14th July). Similarly the German embassy serves the German community through the Goethe Institutes in Hanoi and in Ho Chi Minh City. These centers have similar functions as the American Center and L'Espace. They each have a resource centre and run a program of activities that include visual and performance art events. In general these establishments

have a dual mission, that of disseminating their representative culture and provide access to cultural material and language acquisition tools to Vietnamese nationals, and to cater to their national expatriate contingent as a key resource and meeting hub, notably for expatriate families that seek to expose expat children to their 'homeland culture'.

In addition, there are schools and institutions of higher learning that proudly showcase their transnational affiliations, such as the British International School, the Australian International School, the American International School and the newly opened Canadian International school in Ho Chi Minh City, as well as the Vietnamese German University in Ho Chi Minh City and the Australian Centre For Education And Training (ACET) in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Transnational schools play a role, not only in raising educational standards in Vietnam, or in serving as a form of national cultural ambassadorship, but also in providing a Western education, thus allowing expatriate children (and Vietnamese pupils from more affluent families) to acquire forms of cultural capital that are particularly 'valued' on the international labor market –based on dominant 'modern' neoliberal tropes.

The institutional structure serving expatriates and their needs and interests is expanding relatively quickly in Vietnam, with growing membership in national chambers of commerce and of national cultural community centers and embassy resource centers. Concomitantly, we are currently observing important increases in the number of international school, international hospitals/clinics, law and accounting firms, etc. In the

field of media, we now find a host of magazine and newspaper publications in English[132] and French[133] among other languages (the *Vietnam Revue* for example is published in English, French, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese). Online resources and expatriate networks are also increasingly popular[134]. Shops that sell imported Western products and Western style restaurants are increasingly common, along with transnational associations and social/hobby clubs. These resources have a vital importance for Western expatriates, in that they cater to their taste, lifestyle and interests; they provide services, information, activities and forms of support in English (and other Western language); they curb the risks of isolation, exclusion and culture shock; and they allow Western expatriates to 'consume' Western cultural forms, while also gaining exposure to Vietnamese culture.

The structural apparatus that is being developed by virtue of expatriates' presence in Vietnam also has profound effects on the receiving society, at least in the regions that serve as hubs for expatriate communities, namely Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. It has long been established that "[a]lthough migrants usually prefer a place that minimally disturbs their social organization, migration tends to set in motion a series of changes in the entire social structure" (Driedger, 1973: 257) of the receiving society. As a case in point, we know that institutional completeness within migrant communities in receiving contexts allow immigrants to nurture and express their national and cultural identities and that these provide certain kinds of leverage (Schmitter Heisler, 1986), which serve as forms of social capital and cultural capital, thereby facilitating their social insertion into

[132] (Viet Nam News, Vietnam Investment Review, Vietnam Economic Times, The Word, The Vietnam Pathfinder, The Guide, East & West, Outlook, Vietnam Cultural Window, Vietnam discovery, etc.)
[133] (Le Courier du Vietnam, the Saigon Eco Vietnam Scoop and Vietnam illustré)
[134] (The New Hanoian, InfoShare Hanoi, The Word Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam Expat Classifieds, Expat Services in Vietnam, etc.)

the receiving society. In Vietnam, such institutional structures enable expatriates to enjoy, express, consume, pass on, share and utilize key elements of their (national) cultures, while facilitating their daily operations and enhancing their appreciation/understanding of local cultural forms. So expatriate institutional supports have both, a sheltering effect and potentially, an enabling function depending on how available resources are used.

On one hand, expatriates, like migrant cohorts elsewhere, may engage in patterns of social reproduction, which provide shelter from the unfamiliarity of the host country culture. The propensity of habitus to prompt social actors to chose such adaptation strategies in the receiving society, suggests that cross-cultural integration or assimilation is not self-evident.

> It has, indeed, often been observed that immigrant groups (e.g. 235), middlemen minorities (1), as well as expatriates all over the world create their own 'enclaves' - ecological ghettos and institutional frameworks - which shelter them off from the environment of the host society. Not all 'environmental bubbles', however, are alike, and not all strangers participate in them to an equal degree. Indeed, the 'environmental bubbles' of various groups of strangers may differ on several important points: e.g. the precise nature of their ecological and institutional arrangements, the degree of their self-sufficiency, the tightness of their boundaries vis-à-vis the hosts and the social meaning of their separateness - whether they are excluded from the broader society, passively seclusive [sic] or actively practise [sic] exclusiveness toward the host population (Cohen, 1977: 16)

The development of an institutional framework that supports expatriates in their life and work-related activities speaks to the deployments of countless and overlapping adaptation strategies, that are meant to facilitate the fulfillment of personal, social, familial, and professional priorities. If no comfort food is available, then an expatriate may open a restaurant or open import channels to supply Western foodstuff. If expatriates feel

isolated they put in place social clubs and social networks that meet their needs. One the other hand, these same institutions have an empowering and enabling effect, because they also often seek to promote cross-cultural understanding, and a greater appreciation of the host country culture. In Vietnam, if expatriates are confused and disoriented about the local political economy, they develop organizations that offer information services and workshops. If expatriates want/need to learn more about Vietnamese culture, they proactively organize events and visits that provide greater cultural exposure. Whether sheltering and cross-culturally enabling, these structures (networks of expat-lead organizations and institutions in Vietnam) serve as examples of the way expatriate communities adapt, stemming from individual motivations perhaps, but drawing on the collective potential of the expatriate community. In the case of expatriates in Vietnam, the institutional structures that are being developed to support expatriates' needs and wants are not necessarily deployed to shelter them from the conditions of the host society. In some cases rather, these provide the means to more efficiently navigate the Vietnamese system and enhance cross-cultural understanding, offering expatriates greater access to politico-economic opportunities and improved insight into local cultural forms.

3.6-. Canadian expatriates: Community configuration in Vietnam

The Canadian Census does not target overseas Canadians so we are left with little information on their numbers or practices overseas. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam notes that of the 59,164 visas issued to Canadians in the first eight months of

2009, 87% were tourist visas while 8% were business visas."[135] (Trang Nguyen and Vu Thi Hai Anh, 2010: 5) Placing the number of Canadian business visa holders at approximately 4733 for that period, thus notwithstanding the number of diplomatic visa holders and the number of expats who enter with tourist visas (for example: retirees). Authors of *Portrait of Canadians Abroad – Vietnam* suggest that "[u]nofficial estimates place the number of Canadian citizens currently residing in Vietnam at 1,200 to 1,500." (Trang Nguyen & Vu Thi Hai Anh, 2010: 5) Although this is far less than the number of Canadian expatriates in Hong Kong, which the Asia Pacific Foundation estimates at over 295,000 with 80.2% of Canadian-born expatriates (Zhang & Degolyer, 2011: 4), it seems that the small network of Canadian expatriates in Vietnam still allows community cohesion.

Meanwhile, the Canadian embassy in Hanoi reports that there are approximately 300 Canadian expatriates registered to be living in Vietnam, based on data from the Registry of Canadians Abroad Database (ROCA). Although Canadian officials emphasize that this is a significant underestimation of actual numbers of Canadians in Vietnam, as many Canadians choose not to register. Despite the low level of registration, most Canadian expatriates I have met are fervent nationalists, and testimonies drawn from participant observation, observant participation and interviews confirm that Canadians in Vietnam are likely to discuss Canadian politics, keep themselves up-to-date

[135] The remaining 5% of visa applications is likely to represent diplomatic entries. There are 4 categories of entrance visas for Vietnam: diplomatic visas (Type A), issued to people who work with foreign representation agencies (and their accompanying family); business visas (Type B), issued to people who will be workers, investors or entrepreneurs in Vietnam, (including students, researchers, consultants, volunteers, etc.) and their accompanying family members; tourist visas (Type C), issued to visitors or people with 'other purposes'; and no purpose visas (Type D or Jn) issued to people who have no point of contact or reception within Vietnam.

with mainstream Canadian news, discuss these issues with other Canadian expatriates or their friends and family members in Canada, or participate in online discussion forums and threads on homeland issues. They are actively connected to networks of family and friends 'back home' through social networking sites such as Facebook; they go 'home' regularly for visits; own property and assets in Canada; and enthusiastically talk about Canadian food products (real Canadian bacon, maple syrup, Montreal smoke meat, corn-on-the-cob, poutine, etc.). They wear Canadian symbols and logos; they root for Canadian athletes or sports teams, they "watch hockey when it's possible", and they may even seek to reproduce a Canadian way of life overseas. I was once memorably invited to a Canadian expatriate's house, which he proudly characterized as "a comfortable Canadian home" in Vietnam.

Conversely, language, as well as familiarity and interest in homeland cultural politics, for example, are two markers of differentiation within the Canadian frame of reference, and the Quebecois in particular recognize that there are aspects of their 'national culture' that set them apart as a 'société distincte' [distinct society] (Henderson, 2007); thus, even if the topic of Quebec's sovereignty vs. Canadian federalism is not taken up at casual expat meetings –it is as if divisive homeland politics 'stay at home', while national cultural identity is embodied.[136]

[136] "The most basic difference of opinion [in the field of national cultural identity] is between the 'subjectivists' who maintain that sharing a national identity is simply a matter of people believing that they belong together for some special reason (perhaps because they believe that they have a distinctive culture, history, language or way of life), and 'objectivists', who argue that in order to share a national identity people must really possess distinctive common characteristics, such as a shared culture, history, language or way of life. […] By a sense of belonging together, I mean a belief amongst them that there is some special reason why they should associate together which appeals to something other than, say, that they happen to live in [or come from] the same polity. (Both subjectivist and objectivist accept that the members

> The importance and substance of identity vary both in context and over time [And perhaps also across space]. Within the literature, identity has been used as a sense of belonging (Tajfel 1982; Wetherell 1996a), a particular outlook (Erikson 1974), or as a self-ascribed label (Hall 1996). […] In particular, researchers point to the low salience of political beliefs and the disputed relationship between attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviour [sic]. Each of these, when compounded by the questionable ability of individuals to explain their own identities, proves a stumbling block for any empiricist attempting to capture the true meaning of national identity. (Henderson, 2007: 116-117)

Indeed, national cultural identity, despite being a nebulous and highly subjective dimension of the self, is an important social marker that allows expatriates to position themselves in relation to others. If anything, national cultural identity works as a form of individual and collective distinction. And while expatriates may 'express' and 'negotiate' their identities in context, their discourse, behavior and patterns of practice are telling, for they reveal deep attachments to various aspects of their 'homeland culture'.

Within the expatriate community in Vietnam, Canadians stand out[137] as an example of a fairly cohesive network with some clear, yet subtle, internal divisions. In Hanoi, French Canadians are a clearly demarcated 'sub-group' within the Canadian expatriate contingent. Participant observation and observant participation records confirm that there is a significant turnover of Canadians who attend the monthly expatriate meetings organized by the Canadian embassy, although it is also a regular meeting hub

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of a nation must possess a sense of belonging together, but according to the subjectivists, conationals need share a culture, history or language, only insofar as this is necessary in order to generate or sustain that sense)." (Mason, 2000: 116-117)

[137] Accounting for Canadians in Vietnam, representatives of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada reported that: "unofficial estimates place 1,200 to 1,500 Canadians currently residing in Vietnam." (Nguyen & Vu, 2010: 1) Hinting at concerns over citizenship and new cosmopolitan/transnational lifestyles, the authors of this report ask: "As Vietnam becomes an increasingly attractive 'land of opportunity' for both Vietnamese-origin Canadians [Viet Kieu] and non-Vietnamese Canadians, how does Canada foster a continued sense of pride and belonging among Canadians living in Vietnam?" (Idem) This line of questioning underscores the policy relevance of research on expatriates and their transnational practices, notably on the connections they maintain with their homeland.

for all Canadians in Hanoi. In this context, French Canadians who gather there are eager to speak French amongst themselves. Unwillingly, this serves as a boundary maintenance practice, which determines the configuration of 'differences' (or diversity) within the Canadian expatriate community in Hanoi. With much 'conversational momentum', the (usually loud and dynamic) French-speaking group risks making other non-French speaking Canadians, especially newcomers, feel excluded at these events. Though all French-speaking Canadians I have met speak English fluently and are open to including English-speaking Canadians in their group of friends, the pleasure of 'getting together' and speaking their mother tongue seems to supersede consideration on the overall cohesion of the group.

In fact, French-speaking at these events reflects an important pattern of practice that recalls elements of the Quebecois habitus, a shared sense of familiarity with a cultural frame of reference, a connection to 'home', common knowledge of places, and a sense of 'roots'. At one meeting in particular the Quebecois in the group reminisced fondly about tourtiere (a type of minced meat pie), creton (a pork pâté or meat spread), maple syrup and poutine (a Quebecois dish made of French fries, cheese curd and gravy). The women exchanged recipes to make dishes from scratch, and advised each other on where to find Western foodstuff locally. At another meeting, the Quebecois in the group were debating Quebec news and current events. Of course these conversations, both their linguistic form and content, project a degree of nostalgia and a sustained interest in the 'homeland'. While the connection between language and nationhood has been established (Mason, 2000; Wright, 2000; Lee & Suryadinata, 2007), and while the engagement of

Quebecois in their 'national politico-cultural affairs' is also well-documented (Henderson, 2007), research on the link between food and the nation also confirms that national identity markers are mobilized through subjective preferences that include food.[138] (Ashley, 2004)

Concomitantly, a number of informal conversations I documented following observant participation at the monthly Canadian expat meetings organized by the embassy and Canadian expat delegate, corroborate the fact that English speakers and newcomers may feel excluded, despite the fact that the atmosphere is generally lively and very welcoming. One expatriate in particular mentioned: "I'm not understanding anything of the conversations that are going on" and "thinking of not coming back [to these meetings] because it feels like a click." [Participant observation notes] This newcomer's perception is not completely off, because these meetings are an opportunity for long-term Canadian expatriates to touch-base, so many in attendance already know each other. This produces a 'click effect' or 'in-group dynamics', which can be compounded by language and regional origin or other forms of cultural capital, thus rendering the conversation inaccessible to non-bilingual and/or non-Quebecois Canadians. The 'click' effect is perceived by Anglophone Canadians as French vs.

[138] Using the example of Britishness and the consumption of British foods, Ashley (2004) confirms that national identity is also articulated through dietary preferences. "When Gilbert Adair suggests that 'fish and chips … constitute what one might call … a force for national unity (Adair 1986: 50), he is indicating important truths about the role of food in the formation of national identity. A key dimension in such formations is the concept of 'imagined community', explored nations are essentially 'imagined' in so far as they are the focus of a sense of belonging shared by people who in the nature of things cannot hope to know each other at first hands. […] Far from being removed from everyday life, as some observers claim, 'Daily the nation is indicated, or "flagged" in the lives of its citizenry. Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition' (Ibid [Billig 1995: 6]). It is at this level that food contributes to the formation of nations, and it is in this context that the real significance of 'a nice cup of tea', of 'fish and chips' and of 'the roast beef of old England are to be located." (Ashley, 2004: 80-82)

English in/out group dynamics, when in fact language is just a compounding factor to the pre-existing 'click-effect' emanating from the fact that many long-term expatriates are also 'long time friends/acquaintances'. Speaking French at these meetings is not a conscious boundary maintenance practice meant to ostracize other Canadians; rather, it is an impulsive practice that allow Quebecois and French speaking Canadians to nurture and express a layer of their identities, a core dimension of their habitus, which is articulated as transnational belonging in the context of expatriation overseas. Yet, despite these subdivisions, the Canadian community (composed of both Francophone and Anglophone expatriates) is cohesive enough to produce a distinct network of friends, contacts and acquaintances, which can be mobilized as social capital.

All these patterns of national cultural practice are significant in that they reflect expatriates' sense of nationhood. In fact, in trying to understand 'why' expatriates reproduce these practices overseas, I found that they expressed their predilections, interests, values, beliefs, as an extension of their self-definition, and of their attempts to nurture their 'national distinction'. In short, many Canadian expatriates are actively engaged in nurturing various forms of 'Canadianness', which extends from their habitus, and which serves as a marker of positionality in relation to other expatriates and as a form of social capital that in turn, may provide both social and professional opportunities.

Aside from promoting a monthly meeting, the Canadian embassy along with long-term expatriates who are designated delegates help organize special events such as Canada day parties, 'holidays banquets', BBQs and other formal and informal activities. They may seek to rally Canadian expatriates to contribute to charity events or to

participate in fund raising activities. Canadian institutional presence in Vietnam is also born of private sector initiatives. As a manifestation of Canadian expatriate community vitality, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CanCham) organizes monthly events and is known as one of the most active foreign business organizations in Vietnam, thanks to its regular information sessions, workshops, presentations, member meetings, charity contributions, etc. In fact, the CanCham is one of the key instruments, which allows Canadian expatriates to learn how to adapt their 'Western market assumptions' to the realities and conditions imparted by the Vietnamese political economy. CanCham workshops cover themes such as informal economy, networking, business and investment policies and regulations, income tax, banking, etc.; thus providing insight into the field of commerce, finance and business in Vietnam. Within both major cities (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City) local restaurants (co-)owned by Canadians are well known among the expatriate community. A new Canadian International School was opened in Ho Chi Minh City. And most recently, a new website entitled *Life in Vietnam* (www.vietnam-life.ca) was published online, establishing important transnational links between Canada and Vietnam, notably in terms of providing personal testimonies by Canadian expatriates in Vietnam, as well as information on the distribution and availability of Canadian products in Vietnam, on Canadian-led development projects in Vietnam, on the favorite hobbies and activities of Canadians expatriates in Vietnam, on the business interests of Canadians in Vietnam and of Vietnamese in Canada, etc. The resources that are made available through these means are significant because the core network of Canadians in Vietnam is

stable enough to act as a source of social capital, enabling the deployment of these resources and a sense of camaraderie that encourages mutual support.

In conclusion, while there is ground to substantiate the use of the term 'Westerners' as a denomination for a broad cohort of expatriates who generally 'relate to one another' on the basis of shared worldviews, national cultural differentiation, along with linguistic differences play a part in subdividing the Western expatriate community into smaller national and sub-national cohorts, as in the case of Canadians and its subgroup of French Canadians. The same is true for the historical evolution of political, cultural and economic differences that distinguish each Western nation in its own right. Indeed, generalizations about Western similarities are not meant to whitewash key differences between Western national cultures, distinctions that remain important in expatriates' efforts to reproduce certain ways of life or nurture their sense of national cultural belonging while living and working in Vietnam. This is a key dimension of expatriate's transnational practices, and a pivotal means by which expatriates express and cultivate their 'transnational identities'. Finally, it is important to recall that factors of distinction, notably those that substantiate national cultural, racial/ethnic and linguistic differences, influence the subjective experiences of expatriates, who in turn will inevitably negotiate their relative social positions and modulate their dispositions according to the adaptation imperatives they perceive. Transnational social life may imparts challenges that will compel expats to develop their transnational ties, to nurture their sense of national cultural belonging through activities, commercial and organizational means, and to rely on peers from the local expat community to find a

‘cultural shelter’, or to access/gain locally relevant forms of social/cultural capital. In this process, expatriates are likely to personalize their located experiences, notably through frustrations, anxieties, loneliness or enthusiasm, leading to reflexive and adaptive practices that are ‘uniquely’ deployed to meet their individual, familial and social needs.

Chapter 4

GENDER ROLES, EXPATRIATES HABITUSES AND ADAPTATION OVERSEAS

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4.1-. Adaptation: Accommodating gender roles

Expatriates are likely to experience life and work overseas based on the subjective negotiation of a gendered positionality and related dispositional propensities in various fields of practice/relations. (Camino & Krulfeld, 1994; Brah, 1996; Giles et al., 1996; Indra, 1999; McSpadden, 1999; Kofman, 2000; Pessar & Mahler, 2003; Al-Ali, 2007) They will be affected by the gendered configuration of the receiving society and by the gender-based expectations of host country nationals. Despite advances in producing gender sensitive expat studies, there is an enduring tendency to overlook the role and impact of gender[139] on expats, notably within the fields of transnational mobility and cross-cultural adaptation.

> Gender is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, forces shaping human life and, accordingly, it influences migration and migrants' lives. Nonetheless, gender has been regularly sidelined in scholarly research on international migration over the past 100 years. The same pattern holds, regrettably, for the more recent breakthroughs in migration studies led by early

[139] Like Pessar and Mahler (2003) I do not equate 'sex' and 'gender'. "Sex is best reserved as a simple dichotomous variable: male versus female. Gender is much more complex and involves the ways in which cultures imbue this biological difference with meaning such as demarcating between male and female domains in activities, tasks, spaces, time, dress and so on.' People are enculturated to view these distinctions as natural, inevitable and immutable, not as human constructs (see Ferree et al, 1999; Glenn, 1999; Kandiyoti, 1988; Lorber, 1994)." (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 813)

> proponents of the transnational framework (Basch et al., 1994; Glick Schiller et al., 1992). Although a few scholars noted this omission early on (e.g., Kearney, 1995; Sutton, 1992), we have been disturbed by the overall inattentiveness displayed over "bringing gender in" to this promising body of research. (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 812)

On the one hand, the literature on expatriate women is largely focused on their roles and adaptation as accompanying spouses (Arieli, 2007; Cole, 2011), on their relative privileges/disadvantages as foreigners or white subjects (Leonard, 2008 and 2010) and on the conciliation of their career, family and social priorities while overseas. (Tzeng, 2002) Generally, the experiences of Western expatriates (especially Western women) –in relation to the specific structure of gendered inequalities in receiving 'developing countries' and in relation to patterns of inter-ethnic and cross-cultural sexual practices – have not been critically tackled within the scholarship on transnationalism. On the other hand, there is still a paucity of comparative research on the way expatriate men and women negotiate both gender and sexual relations overseas, as part of their adaptation process. In looking at the gendered experiences of expatriates, my focus is first placed on habitus, and on the overlapping realities of 'life transitions', 'international relocation' and 'resettlement in Vietnam'. With the overlapping of these realities, expatriates experience highly personalized situations that speak to their subjective social position, and to the intersection of gender with other factors of distinction, including marital status and family situation, occupational priorities/status, age, origin, etc. Focusing on testimonies gathered through survey open-ended questions, interview narratives and a focus group exchange on the dating scene, it appears that adaptive challenges are experienced as highly contingent on individual circumstances, and that adaptation can be understood as a

series of strategies/practices that are meant to minimize or counteract the personal and social costs/strains that are born of life transitions, international relocation, and resettlement in Vietnam. In fact, the range of challenges that are experienced by expatriates denote the pivotal influence of gender among other factors of distinction, in the negotiation of social position and in the articulation of dispositions, both of which seem to sway concerns and the perception of challenges.

Expatriate testimonies reveal that 'relocation' can be very disruptive. As such, it is not necessarily the Vietnamese context, or the host society culture that is perceived as unsettling. For some, relocation also overlaps with a life-stage transition, so that together, these interrupt/disrupt the performance of habitual roles and embodied dispositions born of the pervasive constructs, which substantiate the 'roles to play' in particular social positions, producing situations that require significant adjustments in the configuration of relationships. In such cases, gendered dimensions of habitus may be confronted by the requirements of a new social position, which entails having to contend with the conditions of a transnational lifestyle. In an interview, Angela, a middle-aged Amerasian explained that her adaptation process in Vietnam meant coming to terms with the distance that separated her from family members and friends, although her adaptation also underscored a life stage transition that required her to redefine her roles. The frustrations she contended with revolved around her inability to 'care for others' in the same way she had done for years, denoting a clear link to both habitus and the practices that substantiate her identity as a caring mother, sister, friend, etc.

> Angela: … it's the fact that I am away from my family that bothers me most. I feel like a bad mom, a bad sister, a bad daughter, a bad aunt, […]

> because I can't be there with them through hard times, [Pause] or even good times. […] My kids are all grown up and in college but I still feel I should be there, waiting on them, I don't know… [Pause] in case they need something. [Pause] My parents are getting old. My sister has health problems […] and I'm missing important family reunions and events […]
> Interviewer: So your relationships have changed…
> Angela: Yes, and I can't fulfill my role in the family. I should be there for them, you know?!
> Interviewer: mmh, mmh, … and you deal with this how?
> Angela: oh, I learned to use Skype and I call them very often… I travel back at least once a year. [Pause] I'm getting used to it. Since we arrived I made many friends here and I stay busy and fill my time with loads of cultural activities and volunteering […because my husband] is very busy with work.

Angela's experience is centered on her family roles and the frustrations of no longer being able to fulfill them the way she used to. Her disposition regarding 'caring duties' is confronted to practical limitations imposed by distance. She expressed a change in the way she could respond to 'being needed' and an inability to meet her own internalized role-based expectations. Her subjective vantage point highlights the practical limitations related to 'distance' –a consequence of transnational relocation, which forced her to find new means to stay in contact and new ways to fulfill her need to be there for those she loves and cares about.

Angela's adaptation strategies in Vietnam were geared towards meeting her social needs. As an unemployed accompanying spouse, she was in a position of relative dependence on her husband's professional circumstances, counter-balanced by her status as an upper class foreigner living in a fully serviced condo. In the interview, Angela demonstrated great awareness of her social position and of her need to "find a way to make it work." Although her adaptation did not entail many practical difficulties aside from "finding good cheese" and "crossing the street," she expresses nostalgia for "the

way things used to be," a sentiment which seemed to conflate her geographical relocation, with the life stage transition of the 'empty nest'. She understood the privileges imparted by her husband's social position and professional status, although she explained that the 'benefits' that were meant to make her life easier, had the deleterious effect of robbing her of her responsibilities: "at the beginning I was struggling to find something to do." Her husband's employer took care of the move, along with Visa and residency formalities; she had access to a modern grocery store within the vicinity of her residential building; and thanks to her condo housekeeping services, she did not have to worry about household maintenance duties. Angela found herself with a lot of free time. She then compensated by joining organizations and associations, which acted as buffer against the risk of 'culture shock', loneliness, isolation and depression.

Although she was proactive in choosing her adaptation strategies (learning how to use Skype, doing volunteer work, joining associations, keeping busy, etc.),[140] Angela was confronted with new conditions, which she negotiated by reconfiguring her internalized role-based expectations –by learning to support her loved ones in different ways, and by filling her time with activities that provide a sense of social and personal reward, a sense

[140] For instance, Angela joined the Hanoi International Women's Club, which allowed her to make new friends, to participate in charity fundraising activities, and to gain access to a wealth of resources for expats, while exposing her to local cultural norms/traditions via scheduled group activities. Expatriate women, regardless of their occupational status, national origins, or age may benefit from such associations and women's networks, notably as these provide a setting to meet like-minded women while living overseas. In fact, a recent study by Cole (2011) underlines the importance of social networks and associations, as these are likely to meet the needs of accompanying expatriate spouses for a 'go to' resource that provides settlement assistance. Networks such as the Hanoi International Women's Club and the Ho Chi Minh City-based International Ladies in Vietnam association are examples of clubs that are aimed at meeting the needs of expatriate women from around the world as well as upper-class Vietnamese women who have an international background. These associations, in addition to carrying out a full schedule of social, cultural and charity activities, including tennis, mahjong, card games, writers and book club meetings, golf, line dancing, crafts and quilting, toddler and baby playgroups, etc., also provide resources in the form of detailed city maps, city guidebooks, as well as advise and welcome meetings for newcomers.

of fulfillment. In fact, considering that some of her volunteering activities included teaching English to disadvantaged children and caring duties in an orphanage, the 'remodeling' of her interpersonal and social engagements as an expat in Vietnam, seems to underscore the transposition of her 'caring role'. In this case, her adaptive practices were deployed to accommodate her gendered habitus, rather than challenge it.

Expatriate women may consider that they have specific needs, interests and preferences, and that these don't always correspond to those of men. In fact, evidence from interviews points to the fact that expatriate women, especially middle-aged women, are likely to seek support and friendship in women's groups and networks, which cater to their specific interests –as opposed to younger women (without children) who tended to be more active in the bar and nightclub scene, as a strategy to have fun and meet others in their age cohort. Notably, social groups, clubs and associative networks that cater to expatriates seem to organize their activities around what could be conceived as gendered preferences. An informal conversation with a white middle-age expatriate woman from Australia was particularly informative (recorded through observant participation), confirming that men and women sometimes have different leisure preferences. "I used to go hike with the Hash House Harriers and Harriettes, but the Harriers did more drinking than hiking. It was disgraceful! […] I felt pressure to drink and the men would often get rowdy and talk about women in degrading ways. So I switched to going out only with the Harriettes whenever possible. It's a family friendly atmosphere and it's more enjoyable for me. […]" This woman recalled that on a particular occasion, the male members were asking newcomers to drink beer out of their shoe as an initiation ritual. She expressed

annoyance in relation to 'male rites' and the macho attitude she witnessed. Obviously, this serves as an extreme example, which caricaturizes men's patterns of practices in the context of social gatherings. Though based on her first-hand experience, which caused her unease and annoyance, she made an explicit choice to avoid 'male centered' groups, denoting her perception of gendered differences in preferences regarding forms of entertainment/leisure. Her patronage of the Harriettes and avoidance of the Harriers, speaks to a process of place-making, whereby a conscious choice derived from her gendered emotional sensibilities underscores her choice to define the terms of her membership into a specific group. Her adaptive practices therefore sought to accommodate her gendered habitus, and her gender-based preferences, worldviews and values.

As a testament to an increasing acknowledgement of women's distinct experience as expatriates, the volume of resources available by and for expatriate women is expanding rapidly, not only in the form of social clubs and association offering 'activities' that are in line with women's interests, but also in the form of online communities. The inauguration of the ExpatWomen Website (www.expatwomen.com) is another piece of evidence that expatriate women in general are facing particular gendered realities and in turn, seek out resources that cater to their specific needs/wants. The ExpatWomen Website provides country-specific information for women expatriates, as well as a monthly newsletter and the possibility to join their online member community to partake in forums or share personal experiences. Social networking and community building amongst expatriate women constitute gendered adaptive strategies that hinder

isolation and loneliness. Therefore it is not surprising that expatriate social clubs targeting women, and accompanying spouses specifically, are multiplying.[141] The scholarship on expatriation ought to consider gender as an important factor in the analysis of adaptation abroad, notably as part of a more in-depth appraisal of the connections between gendered dispositions (needs, preferences, roles, values), key challenges related to gendered social positioning, and gendered coping strategies.

4.2-. Navigating a gendered landscape: Expat roles, social positions and local norms

Although most accompanying spouses are women, men who take on such a role may experience challenges that emanate from the marginality of their position as 'trailing partner' and/or 'full-time parent', especially in a patriarchal society where women largely assume 'caring duties' within the domestic sphere. "Even in the cases of apparent role reversal, the social infrastructure undergirding skilled labour [sic] migration – social norms, expectations and facilities – continue to entrench gender roles and identities along well-worn paths" (Yeoh & Khoo, 1998: 167) William (an interview respondent) explained that his wife was posted in Vietnam and that he left his job in order to follow her with their children. When asked "what is the hardest thing for you right now?" he answered "… the change in responsibilities. I am used to having a professional identity

[141] Amidst the huge range of new publications on expatriate experiences and 'guidebooks', there is also a growing number of key publications that reflect the realities and experiences of expatriate women, such as *Expat Women Confessions* (by Andrea Martin and Victoria Hepworth), *Thrive* (by Ruth Kuguru, Lisa Blunt Rochester and Alejandra Guzmán), *Beyond Borders: Portraits Of American Women From Around The World* (by My-Linh Kunst), *A Broad Abroad: The Expat Wife's Guide to Successful Living Abroad* (by Robin Pascoe) and *Expat: Women's True Tales of Life Abroad* (by Christina Henry de Tessan). These books illustrate well the fact that women are increasingly sharing their experiences of life and work abroad, and that there is a significant demand for gender sensitive perspective revolving specifically around the challenges that women face as expatriates, notably as accompanying spouses, mothers, but also as career-minded professionals.

so that feels as a loss. […] It's not just about being the main income earner and now having to maintain the household. Now I am a [fulltime] father and that is great to spend time with [my children…] after school. [… Here, in Vietnam] I do a few things on the side but they do not define me the way my fulltime work did [before]." In William's experience, such a drastic change in responsibility and in the shifting of 'perceived roles' meant readjusting his identity from 'worker' to 'fulltime father'. In stating "now I am a father" he alludes to his "new" principal occupational status. William was a father before coming to Vietnam, though this new full time position required adjusting one of his main identity markers. He was keen to highlight the pros and cons of his new social position, adding "most of the other fulltime parents I meet are mothers. I miss having a circle of male friends with professional ambitions. I miss that!" Indeed, being able to relate to others within a circle of peers with similar interests is important, but for William, his perceived change of position also entailed no longer having access to a social network to which he could fully relate as a 'professional man' –beyond his role of parent.

The situation of accompanying spouses is particular, notably for those who are unemployed. According to the Brookfield's 2009 Global Relocation Trends Survey, 79% of corporate and diplomatic expatriates are relocated with an accompanying spouse, of which 96% are unemployed. This same survey reveals that 65% of overseas assignments fail in part because of spouse dissatisfaction. (Markel, 2012) Moreover, a survey conducted by The Interchange Institute (2004) also confirmed that expatriates who are unemployed have generally lower levels of 'life satisfaction' as those who are employed or those who describe themselves as homemakers. As such, gender and occupational

status do intersect in their effects on adaptation, whereas life satisfaction overseas may be dependent on carrying out a fulfilling role, and within the fame of internalized gendered aspirations/expectations, and whereby some men and women may have internalized different ideas about the relative symbolic value they attach to particular social positions. Work serves as a means of social integration and for expatriates and it seems to be linked to life satisfaction. It may be that for men who undergo a life transition from paid labor to home-making, that adaptation imperatives confront the habitus, destabilizing some deeply internalized assumptions about life satisfaction and personal fulfillment, especially if one's former occupational status was perceived as a key identity marker.

The social and cultural capital William had accumulated within the field of his work relations and professional field of practice was no longer relevant in his daily life. His new role in Vietnam entailed developing social connections with other parents, mostly mothers with different gendered priorities, beyond those related to parenting. As a result he was unable to connect with them on the basis of his 'masculine' frame of reference and preferences. In the interview, William made a joke about the "expat mom culture" he had witnessed and unassumingly laughed at the idea that 'shopping and getting his nails done' were not hobbies and time fillers he would indulge in when it came to occupying his free time, while the kids are at school. He clarified that he wasn't being sexist, and that he tried going for coffee with groups of expat mothers, though he just didn't relate to most of them. A few of them tried introducing William to their husbands, but scheduling difficulties made it hard to arrange for meaningful 'social time' with other men who are working full time. Ultimately, William conceded that he was

looking for an expat sports association to meet some male friends. Again, this denotes the importance of social clubs, notably those that cater to the gendered preferences of men and women. William's experience is symptomatic of a pronounced gendered division of labor that is pervasive within the expat community and within the receiving society. By virtue of this occupational transition, together with his relocation, he became a minority within a minority, one of the few men, with full time parenting and home-making responsibilities. This situation destabilized William's habitus, whereby his new social position and social role are 'out of synch' with his predispositions and preferences. William current role imposes new sets of practices, demanding a redefinition of his self-concept, which William negotiated relatively consciously, notably in his interactions with Vietnamese nationals.

When asked what were the reactions of Vietnamese nationals when he would tell them about his situation, he conceded:

> William: I don't really know many Vietnamese yet. I think most Vietnamese I have met are surprised that I am a fulltime father. This is pretty unusual for them. I notice their confused expression [… so] sometimes I say that I used to work [in a highly technical field in my country of origin[142]], but now I work from home as a writer… [William offers a big smile…] which is not far from the truth. It's easier for them to understand. Aside from that I did not get any direct feedback.

By telling a little white lie, William also avoids judgment from Vietnamese nationals. According to Vietnamese conventions a man without 'work' who is supported by his wife would easily be conceived as emasculated. So by saying that he used to work within a prestigious professional field and that these days he 'works from home', Vietnamese

[142] William's field of work was censored to guarantee his anonymity.

nationals can assume that they have 'enough money' to no longer work so hard. In fact, maneuvering around gendered expectations in Vietnam may be a little tricky; and for anyone in 'unconventional situations', it may be easier and more convenient to bend the truth a little, rather than giving a longer and potentially shocking explanation. In this way, William saves face, in his rapport with host country nationals.

In Vietnam, dominant gender and sexual scripts differ in significant ways from Western or Occidental norms, especially in terms of the social pressure to abide by traditional values and prescribed social roles. "While most cultures use social norms to guide behaviors, social norms in Vietnam are particularly powerful (Gammeltoft, 1999; Pham Van Bich, 1997; Jamieson, 1993)," (Go et al., 2002: 468) notably in terms of appropriate gender roles and patriarchal heteronormativity. Expatriates, based on their relative social position as men and women will have to 'decode' local scripts, including dominant gender and sexual dynamics. As part of a larger process of adaptation as they live and work in Vietnam, expatriates will need to develop an understanding of the cultural assumptions and expectations that are born of their perceived social positions within various fields of practice/relations. In doing so, the habitus may be engaged in a process of adjustment, either to accommodate their pre-dispositions or as a challenge to personal propensities. A transformative habitus is therefore manifested through forms of adaptation or rather, as a product of adaptive practice and their effects on dispositions, not only in the context of expatriation to Vietnam, but more generally in the overlapping of life-stage or lifestyle transitions and international relocation. Clearly, the degree to which dispositions will be reinforced, modified or new ones acquired, will differ from

one social actor to another and from one context to another. However, as part of adaptation, the articulation of gendered preferences, dispositions, motivations, and roles, may have to be negotiated and/or modulated (relatively consciously) depending on the subjective position of expatriates and the conditions imposed by situational constraints.

Specific life-transitions are also embedded in gendered realities and gender roles, such as pregnancy and parenting. On this basis, the experience of expatriate parents-to-be stands out because of an underlying dissonance between their own deeply held values about gender equality, and predominant beliefs and practices in the Vietnamese receiving context. As a highly patriarchal society with strong Confucian traditions, Vietnamese society confers to men particular privileges that stand in stark contrast to the social expectations associated with women and their roles. And, as many expatriates discover, this is also reflected in the way people talk about gender, even before a baby is born. Liz Ledden explains in an online interview: "Sadly, there's also a preference for having a baby boy rather than a girl, something I've discovered as people ask about my pregnancy." (Freedman, 2010) There is still a deep-seeded tendency to favor the idea of a first-born son in Vietnam. This reflects a significant difference between a prevailing gender bias that is embedded in Vietnamese cultural dispositions, and modern Western dispositions towards gender equality, notably in terms of the contestation of differential symbolic value associated to men and women. In turn, this might explain why some expatriates are surprised to witness such a phallocentric attitude among many Vietnamese.

Traditional Vietnamese ways of thinking, which find their roots in Confucian beliefs and deep convictions about sex-based differences, contribute to gender inequalities. As such Vietnamese boys have a higher social status than girls, although this does not mean that Vietnamese parents love their girls less. It only means that according to social norms and dominant gender constructs, boys are perceived as 'more important within a family' because it falls upon them to preserve their family legacy. By contrast, women 'symbolically' leave their family the day they marry, entering the husband's family as a new daughter to her in-laws, often taking on the care of her parents in-law and the maintenance of their household as part of her responsibilities as wife. So traditionally, girls are lost to another family when they marry, while boys remain in the family, with the prospect of introducing their (usually younger[143]) bride as a new daughter to their parents. It is the progeny of the son that will perpetuate the family lineage. The progeny of the daughter will be perpetuating her husband's lineage, and not the other way around generally.

In a recent CNN article pre-empting the release of her new book *Sexual Frustrations of a Single White Female in Hanoi*, Carolyn Shine wrote:

> From my observations, the boy is likely to be pandered to more than a baby girl, have his genitals and other parts fondled more, and more

[143] According to traditional conventions, "[t]he bride will be younger than the groom, and this is encrypted into the Vietnamese language, since there's no pronoun available to say "I love you" to an older woman, unless that love is platonic." (Shine, 2011) Vietnamese culture imposes fairly strict constraints regarding the age of a man and woman who intend to marry. The man should be older than the woman for a variety of reasons. While an older man is more likely to be able to provide for his wife and family, a younger wife is more likely to outlive her husband, therefore caring for him until his death. According to Confucian traditions women are expected to manifest submissiveness to their husband, however age is also a variable of social status and authority, whereby 'older subjects' are esteemed, respected and tended to, by younger actors. Consequently, an older wife would have the upper hand in relation to her younger husband. This would place both of them in an untenable position and be counter-intuitive in the context of traditional gender roles.

> publicly. They are given wildly different playthings, encouraged to vocalize more and urinate anywhere, and he will notice from infancy that he is served and doted on by females. [Par.] Not really an assembly line for the production of Sensitive New Age Guys. [Par.] Visiting my landlady, Nga, one day, I asked who was home. She paused from maneuvering her screaming toddler's penis into a drinking cup for peeing in, to reply, "Just me and my boy." [Par.] "Where's your daughter?" I asked. [Par.] "Oh, she's here too," said Nga. [Par.] Her sweet-natured daughter, Chanh, was sitting in her room, completely forgotten. The memory persists. In my imagination, Chanh is just sitting on the bed, looking at the wall, waiting to be needed for something. (Shine, 2011)

Although this denotes Carolyn's subjective perception, it hints to an important cross-cultural dissonance: one which pins Western women's adherence to gender equality principles, against the perceived rigidity of Vietnamese gender roles and the contrast between 'masculine vs. feminine' gendered expectations within Vietnamese social structure. Of course this also represents a phenomenological divide, which speaks to a dissonance between Carolyn's 'gender awareness' and her endorsement of gender equality, and what she perceives as her interlocutor's role in (re)producing a phallocentric reality that contributes to the invisibility of women/girls.

In the Vietnamese receiving context, expatriates may be prompted to try to understand the meanings attributed to gender and to the part played by gender roles in Vietnamese families and society. This may represent a fundamental break between the habitus of many expatriate women of Western origins and the traditional dispositions of Vietnamese nationals in terms of their gendered expectations and the internalization of beliefs about sex-based differences affecting their conception of 'appropriate gender roles'. Male expatriates may be less likely to notice gender inequalities, or to perceive these as 'problematic'. Only one man (a survey respondent), who happens to be an

'ethnic Vietnamese' (Viet Kieu) from Northern Europe explicitly cited "inequalities between men and women" as a challenging day-to-day reality, denoting his awareness of acute differences between what he was used to in his country, and what he found in Vietnam. Dominant constructs that dominate the gender configuration of Vietnamese society are deeply internalized as a result of conventional forms of socialization.

> In the Vietnamese culture, women are *educated to be nurturing*, willing to sacrifice and wait for her husband even until they turn into stones. This *expectation has shaped* the Vietnamese women to be […] beautiful and respectful […] but at the same time it is a factor that […] contributes to […] *shaping the modern Vietnamese* men into a lazy and macho [archetype…]. Plus, the *old conceptions* of "Trọng Nam Khinh Nữ" [male chauvinism] and "Chong Chua, Võ Tôi" ['husband as a lord and wife as princess' conception of marriage] (Dang & Vu, 2010 [Emphasis added])

further exacerbate pressures related to gendered expectation. The structural and cultural conditions of Vietnam impose gender scripts and gendered constructs on both Vietnamese nationals and expatriates. Although Western expatriate women are given a degree of leeway because they are 'foreign', Vietnamese nationals may judge them according to local cultural norms and internalized values.

> The character of Vietnamese gender roles reflects the over two-thousand-year influence of Confucianism, which is still the most important single influence on gender roles. Vietnamese women were comparably less degraded by the "three submissions" (to father, husband, and eldest son) and the four virtues (skill with her hands, an agreeable appearance, prudence in speech, and exemplary conduct) than women in China. [...] Gender roles in Vietnam are changing rapidly, though with different speeds in different social layers. Although men are still more visible in society, it is not necessarily a sign of their also having more power. Far from a clear picture, the one sure statement is that Vietnamese gender roles are loaded with contradictions. [Par.] There is still a continuity of Vietnamese ideas of the power of women within the household ("the general of the interior"), and the way in which state socialism splits men and women. (Pastoetter, 2000)

Although many men abstain from such practices, it is acceptable and common for Vietnamese men to drink, smoke, gamble, and have pre-marital or extra-marital sex. And while modernization and industrialization are changing gender dynamics, old constructs seem to have persistent effects on ideas about gender.

> That Vietnamese men are as imbued with the work ethic as are the women can be attested to by any observer of the economic activity of the Vietnamese refugee communities in the West, where Vietnamese men commonly hold two or sometimes three jobs at a time to support their families. But the popular notion persists, commonly abetted by male authors, such as the nineteenth-century libertine and poet, Tran Te Xoung (1890), that the height of machismo is not some Mediterranean predilection to physical abuse […] women, but rather a gentlemanly idleness at their expense: "Drink and gamble 'til you're in over your head, but even if you are out of money, your kid's mother is still out there selling her wares." (Pastoetter, 2000)

Conversely, smoking, drinking and partying late in the night is not considered acceptable as it is contrary to constructs about 'proper women'; according to conservative beliefs, a decent girl should be home, tending to her family. It is her expected role because she is constructed as subservient, self-sacrificing, and domestically inclined. A survey respondent, Eva explained how this affected her experience: "as a woman who smokes, drinks and goes out. It doesn't enable me to have deep friendship with other Vietnamese girls/women." Indeed, cross-cultural differences related to gendered social norms may create a divide between some Western and Vietnamese women, who may not appreciate the same forms of entertainment or fail to share similar hobbies, partly because comparatively, Vietnamese women are not raised or conditioned to 'take advantage' of the same degree of freedom and self indulgent practices. Eva does not take her reflection further, though her testimony implies that her predilection (as a 'modern liberated young

woman' –free from the constraints of tradition and conservative family/community expectations), and hence a dimension of her habitus, is fundamentally at odds with the idea she has of Vietnamese women. This creates difficulties in establishing cross-cultural friendships based on common interests. Eva is positioned as an outsider looking in. She is 'free' and does not have to negotiate gender according to local scripts. In this case, her practices reflect her Western predilection, rather than an attempt at adaptation. As such, her testimony she implies that in order for her to form a 'friendship' with a Vietnamese woman, the latter would have to deviate from local gender norms, and engage in culturally 'deviant' conceptions of femininity (in reference to Vietnamese values/expectations) in order to 'cross path' with Eva and understand or share her lifestyle preferences. She does not seem to have considered that perhaps, if she really wanted to form friendships with Vietnamese women, that it is she who would have to adjust her attitude. This is a fairly common Western-centric or ethnocentric inclination, visible in expatriates' attitudes and the contradiction between a desire to "encounter the Other" and a latent unwillingness to adjust their expectations/practices in order to more appropriately fit-in, in the host-country culture.

Eva's testimony also implies that her patterns of practice reflect a deeper disposition related to class privilege. In fact, going out, smoking and drinking, as 'leisure activities' is not generally possible for young Vietnamese women because most of them do not have access to the disposable income necessary to do so. Eva's lifestyle is simply economically inaccessible to most Vietnamese women from her age cohort, therefore her disposition and preferences are cross-cultural dissonant at the level of both gendered

prescriptions and class privilege. Here, it is thus crucial to point out that factors of distinction related to gender and class, seem to affect not only the experience of expatriates per se, but also inter-cultural relations with host country national. On top of class distinction, gendered realities also intersect with occupation and age, producing circumstances that impose conflicting demands on expatriates. Expatriate women in high-level positions at work (managerial or directorial functions) may struggle to conciliate divergent social expectations because their formal authority collides with the assumption of women's 'lower status' and expectations of feminine subservience in Vietnamese society. This is also exacerbated by age, whereas being older usually imparts respect and clout, while being young is associated with a lower social status.

In 'public life' men enjoy a higher status than women, although being a foreigner can afford influence and privilege in specific situation, or rather, disdain and disadvantage in other contexts. 'Being foreign' intersects with 'being a woman', so that professional expat women with leading responsibilities at work, may experience difficulties in establishing their formal authority and leadership over Vietnamese nationals, especially Vietnamese men. Foreign authority may recall old modes of colonial exploitation and unequal power dynamics, producing tensions with that sense of Vietnamese national pride. Though the intersections of these factors of distinction represents the complexity inherent in negotiating one's positionality, as an expat (a Western foreigner), as a woman, of a particular age, and with a high professional status entailing managerial authority.

As such, some expatriates may face the compounded effects of factors of distinction that define conflicting social positions. Elly, a female expatriate shares her gendered experience of workplace cross-cultural relations, highlighting how the normative social hierarchy is structured and the underlying difficulties in self-positioning based on her 'outsider' status, her gender and her age, which together seem to conflict with her professional status and functions. In response to one of the survey's open-ended question, Elly explains "My challenges mostly come from work. Older Vietnamese men don't usually want to listen to a woman, especially a *younger foreign woman*. […] This can make things difficult." (Added emphasis) Elly's subjective perception emphasizes the difficulties inherent in the conciliation of her perceived professional authority with other factors of distinction (gender and age), which have compounding effects.

This is particularly interesting because it indicates that the structural forces, which produce sets of inequalities and biases, are not necessarily coherent with one another. They compete and collide, especially within the context of social change, whereby transformations within the domain of culture and political economy, such as those allowing younger foreign women to occupy positions of authority in Vietnam, create tensions, not just in her capacity to negotiate the intersecting markers of differentiation that define her social position, but also as per the dispositions of Others in 'accepting her', in the plurality of positions she occupies. Evidently, expatriates navigate specific fields of practice/relations with a relative understanding and awareness of the tensions that are incurred by the intersections of markers of differentiation based on class, sex and gender, age, professional status and origin. Although in some cases, conscious efforts

may be exerted in order to 'correct' or 'adjust' particular mannerisms, ways of thinking and acting.

4.3-. Gender performance: Balancing costs and rewards in different fields

Testimonies show that some expatriates are very aware of their conflicting roles/status and of the need to adapt or adjust their behavior to meet situational social expectations. Susan, a survey respondent with over 5 years of residency in Vietnam, explains how she had to adapt her mannerisms according to local social norms: "one example is how foreigners [sic] speak their mind and how I had to learn to not speak too harshly and to control my face so I didn't look too angry. I learned from working in a good Vietnamese environment that saying something with a smile on your face can make tensions less [sic], something which the Vietnamese are great at and I am thankful to have learned (somewhat) […]" Although expatriate men may also face this necessity in some contexts, there is greater pressure for women especially, to remain gracious and seemingly acquiescent in Vietnamese society. Although expatriates are 'allowed' a degree of transgression due to the fact that they are foreign, adapting to local ways has its share of benefits, as it demonstrates cultural literacy (i.e.: the capacity to 'read' – accurately decode cultural practices, mores and mannerisms and make necessary adjustments to one's behaviors and expectations). For expatriates, cultural literacy serves as form of cultural capital, as it facilitates operations in everyday life while overseas; and it may be, that it is also a catalyst for the development of social capital, whereas relations with host country nationals may be established more easily.

Expatriates' 'trans-cultural literacy' can be conceived as a three-step iterative process involving: the acquisition of knowledge about the host country culture and the development of an understanding of local mores and mannerisms; through reflexive considerations and conscious efforts, the adoption of new or different ways of acting or the critical adjustment of old attitudes in line with local cultural forms; and a subjective appraisal of the success or failure of such efforts based on the outcome of interactions/(re)actions. Susan's input is a great example, demonstrating how she came to understand key cultural differences and overtime, and learned how to act more appropriately in order to generate a more positive response from host country nationals.

This is specifically where 'gender performance' comes in. To be clear, when I speak of 'gender performance', I refer specifically to Goffman's (1956 and 2004) dramaturgical approach, notably the application of his theory on the 'representation of the self' in the analysis of gender as both, subjectively embodied and 'socially performed'. So in light of our gendered habitus and positionality, and in response to perceived norms emerging from structural and cultural conditions,

> we play down some aspects of our identity and play up others, and it is this pragmatic gauging of the identity we present to the context we are in which allows us to conceive of identity as a narrative constructed for the […] purposes of social and cultural interaction and acceptance. And, as Goffman (1963: 42-44) argued in *Stigma*, the pressure, the need to perform palatably, to produce acceptable identity narratives, to pass oneself off as (Sell, 2004 :31)

fitting the perceived and ascribed criteria of a particular group. "This is why the identity narratives of outsiders of any ilk negotiating admission into a society or culture are of particular interest." (Idem) In other words, gender is not only a force that structures

societies[144] and a factor of distinction that influences the relative social position of actors within the structure of specific fields; it is also embodied within habitus, because social actors are socialized to learn and recognize, as well as accept the structural modalities of gender and normative forms of sexuality. Social actors are therefore conditioned to integrate or reject particular gender and sexual scripts.

> As a constantly reiterated cultural norm gender is deeply inscribed upon our bodies. At the same time, the cultural necessity for a performative reiteration points to a constitutive instability in gendered identity. It is this instability that can be prised open to create a space for the construction of marginal or abject sexualities. (McNay, 1999: 98)

The performance of gendered and sexual scripts underscores the malleability and negotiated character of practice, in response to structural and cultural conditions. The relation between performance or re-enactments and the constitution of habitus is therefore an important aspect of the theorization of cross-cultural adjustment/adaptation and of reflexive transformation.

Some expatriates seemed to who have some awareness of the modalities that guide their interactions and an understanding of the rewards and sanctions that gender and sexual scripts entailed in the Vietnamese receiving context. As such, they are likely to 'perform gender' as a form of negotiation between their dispositions (their embodied gendered self), and the social expectations they feel they must comply with in specific

[144] As such "gender should also be understood "simultaneously as a structure, that is, a latticework of institutionalized social relationships that, by creating and manipulating the categories of gender, organize and signify power at levels above the individual" (Ferree et al., 1999: xix [Original emphasis]). Recognizing that gender becomes embedded in institutions lays the foundation as well for analyzing the structural factors that condition gender relations in addition to ideological factors. "[M]ajor areas of life – including sexuality, family, education, economy, and the state - are organized according to gender principles and shot through with conflicting interests and hierarchies of power and privilege" (Glenn, 1999:5)." (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 813)

fields of practice/relation. Out of the 20 women I interviewed, a quarter cited gendered performance issues as factors in the experience of challenges:

> Elena (white female in her late-twenties): My Vietnamese friends and colleagues always emphasize that I am so much prettier when I wear makeup and dress ladylike. They are pretty blunt about it too, even when they think I've gained or lost weight. […] When I fit the bill of Vietnamese femininity, I get props, but when I don't, I get comments like "the way you looked yesterday was much better!" […] It's impossible to live up to the ideal of Vietnamese femininity. I don't want to wear high heels or pointy girly shoes everyday, I am not comfortable wearing frills. […] I am not always graceful or delicate in how I do things or express myself. […] And I only wear makeup on special occasions […]
> Interviewer: So you feel that this is the archetype of Vietnamese femininity and you feel pressure to abide by these expectations?
> Elena: Sort of, … hummm… but it's more that they'll let you know constantly if they think you're pretty or not. And if you're not 'girly' then you're not pretty… [Pause] … I was never self-conscious in that way before, but now, I'm starting to worry about my appearance, you know, what I project and what they will say.
> Interviewer: Have you changed the way you usually dress or your way of acting?
> Elena: Yeah, I'm definitely more careful depending on where I'm going, what I'm doing [Pause] and who I'm meeting. [Pause] I get much more positive reactions from men and women when I dress pretty and act more feeble than I really am… [laugh] I started giving weak handshakes at work [laugh] …

Focusing on gendered expectations related to public appearances and behaviors, and on the explicit feedback of her friends/colleagues, Elena's testimony points to the progressive internalization of new and different parameters related to the projection of her femininity. While she feels uncomfortable about adopting some of these behavioral parameters in her everyday life, the positive and negative reinforcement she received have raised her sensitiveness regarding what Others might think or say. She demonstrates an awareness that can be linked to a reflexive capacity, notably in her conscious effort to perform gender in ways that are more socially appreciated. She learned 'when' it is

important, and 'how' to perform a type of femininity that provides greater social rewards in various contexts.

Elena clearly understands that local attitudes about femininity differ from her dispositional outlook and habitual mannerisms. So on some occasions, she may make a conscious effort to 'look' and 'act' the part in order to get more positive responses. Gender performance, articulated as 'acting feeble', 'giving weak handshakes', and 'being careful' to 'look pretty' depending where she goes and who she meets, speaks to Elena's understanding of local gendered social expectations and of the rewards incurred by 'appropriate performance'. She does however express a slight discomfort with some of the gendered expectations and attitudes people have towards her, notably the explicit nature of the feedback she receives. She seems engaged in a reflexive process, which underscores a degree of compromise (in relation to her disposition and the internalization of a new form of self consciousness), as well as a desire to heed her own 'comfort zone' (in relation to her 'style' preferences). Adaptation here takes a number of forms, such as the latent process of becoming more self-conscious, and the practical choices behind dressing or acting in a way that differs from usual habits. Adaptation strategies can therefore include forms of gender performance, which confront habitus and an actors' internalized dispositions.

Serena, another interview respondent revealed a particular awareness of her gendered social position. As a petite woman in her early 20s, with light colored hair and blue/green eyes, she explained that she easily attracts the attention of men, whether in the West or in Asia. Playing and performing her femininity is something she learned during

her teens and early adulthood in North America, so she is conveniently predisposed to 'fit in' and 'play the game' according to local social expectations.

> Serena: The fact that I'm a young woman is more helpful than not I think. I get so much help by flashing a smile and flapping my eyelashes around… [laugh …] but that's no different from [back home …] here, I am careful to always be really polite and really soft-spoken. … [Pause] oh and smiling is really important. […] Already I have [learned] basic Vietnamese, so I get by quite well. Usually the first thing people say to me is "Em rất đẹp" [you are so beautiful] I say "cảm ơn" [thank you] and try to move on… If I stay around […] too long then they don't want to let me go, they invite me for tea, […and] food, and then they want to introduce me to their whole family and take pictures of me […] it's nice of them, but it's tedious when it happens all the time. I say 'Em phải đi gặp bạn của tôi, xin lỗi' [I have to go meet a friend of mine, excuse me]. I think it is because they are not used to seeing girls with light skin and long blond hair [… laugh]. Ah, I already received a number of [love] declarations […] and some Vietnamese boys I know like to serenade me in Vietnamese… it's pretty funny! [Laugh]
> Interviewer: [Laugh] Have you changed the way you dress or elements of your appearance since you are in Vietnam?
> Serena: Not really. I just adjusted for the weather. I have a particular style […]. I usually wear eye makeup and oh I love wearing dresses and dainty sandals. […]

In the case of Serena, her feminine habitus already meets 'first glance' Vietnamese social expectation and she 'plays the game' knowing that she is rewarded with positive attention for 'fitting the part.' She also seems to have fun doing it or at least 'takes it in stride'.

> Serena: Oh I remember this one time, I was going really slow on my motorbike in a turn, but it was in a little hill in a back alley and I hit a patch of sand and the motorbike slid so I fell onto my side. […] In half a second I had four Vietnamese boys lifting the motorbike off me and helping me to my feet… […] they were so nice, […] they even helped dust me off … [giggle] then they all took pictures of me with them with their phones. [laugh]

Here, Serena emphasizes the advantage she perceives, notably in receiving help from four young men in a moment of need. However, with the intersection of gender, age, status,

nationality, origin, racial/ethnic as well as skin color, particular situations may impart challenges, some more frustrating than others:

> Interviewer: So you haven't experienced any difficulties related to your gender or age?
> Serena: mmmh … I think maybe because I am young, people are less likely to take me seriously but I am a university student so my status doesn't give me much prominence. Like anything, I think being pretty and chatty helps a lot. But mainly, I think because I am a Westerner, many men usually assume that I drink booze [alcohol] and that I am easy to get in bed [with]. I don't' drink and I don't sleep around. I am not even looking for a boyfriend right now. It's really annoying to have drinks shoved in my face and having to stand my ground. […It's] like I play the game for the perks, but I'm totally on my guard, for sure…
> Interviewer: you said men assume you drink alcohol and that you're 'easy', do you mean Vietnamese men or foreign men?
> Serena: both. […]

She is aware that her social position does not afford significant clout in Vietnam, but knowing that she represents a 'model of beauty', that her looks coincide with dominant construct of 'prettiness', she is complicit in taking advantage of structural and cultural conditions. The major drawback she noted related to being a white Western woman, because a prevailing stereotype about them, held by both Western and Vietnamese men is that Western women are more 'liberal' and likely to drink alcohol and be willing to engage in premarital or casual sex. Serena mentioned: "that's offensive but I know why… [pause – smirk] cause it's sort of true compared to most Vietnamese girls…" Serena demonstrated a keen sense of awareness about her difference and the fact that gendered expectations along with stereotypes (linking her 'age', 'origin' and gender) create 'awkward' situations for her. She explicitly resists giving into pressures (related to 'drinking alcohol', 'sleeping around' and 'the imperative of being in a relationship') and found it tiring that people had such assumptions. What she considers "true" is the

perceived differences between Western women and Vietnamese women, and the adherence to such construct by men, who treat her according to her perceived social position as a young Western woman.

In fact, she went on to explain that she enjoys going to nightclubs to dance though she drinks only water or fruit juice. She reported receiving "a lot of unwanted attention" from both foreign and Vietnamese men, especially when she went out alone. "At first I went out with expat friends and asked the guys to watch out for me, but it was awkward because they were checking out other girls but they [the girls] all thought I was a girlfriend so it kind of put them [her 'guy friends'] in a weird position." Eventually she resorted to another strategy. Consistently leaving good tips and becoming 'friends' with the manager and staff of her favorite nightclubs, she found that eventually, she could rely on them for some protection if necessary. As an anecdote, she recounted that: "once we were friends, I sometimes brought them food that I made and spent time chatting with them behind the DJ booth. […] And I always dance near the bar where they can see me. I even put my bag behind the counter." Thus, they could 'watch out for her' and 'watch her stuff'. That strategy was so successful that they would even make sure she hopped in a secure taxi on her way out of the club. She worked hard to develop the necessary social capital to enable her to feel safe and avoid hassle from over-eager men. She was aware of her vulnerable position as a pretty young white woman navigating the nightlife of a foreign receiving environment, sometimes alone. Choosing to develop a good rapport with locals and rely on them to protect and help her was an effective adaptation strategy, which emphasizes the link between her social position and her reliance on social capital,

but also the difference between her habitus and the dominant constructs of Western women. In Serena's case, social capital provided 'benefits' to compensate for the shortfalls of her social position (and the constructs that correlated to that position) within the field of the 'nightlife'. She is aware of her vulnerability as a 'desired sex object', and went to great lengths to develop social capital as a strategy to ensure her protection and physical integrity. This strategy is part and parcel of a process of negotiation, which Serena consciously deployed in order to continue doing what she loves: 'going out to dance'; while dealing with gendered sexual expectations that are incoherent with her dispositions.

Serena does however perceive and recognize (as a reality, which she objectivates) a fundamental difference in the way Western women and Vietnamese women are usually engaged in public life, whereas she observes and considers true the fact that single Western women in Vietnam are likely to be more 'liberal' than most of their Vietnamese counterparts. While situating herself outside of the dominant typecasting of single Western women, she explicitly endorses the stereotypes associated with both the Vietnamese and the Western archetypes, whereby the former are caricatured as 'more conservative', showing greater 'restraint'; while the latter are portrayed as actively taking part in a postcolonial subculture of 'privileged consumers' that thrive in the emergent bar scene of a tourist-driven industry, which feeds on the sexualized fantasies of men, both Westerners and Vietnamese.

The situations she described in the interview (men grabbing her posterior, drunk men following her to the washroom, getting explicit invitations to "fuck", having to argue

about not wanting to dance with a man, refusing an alcoholic drink, or feeling the need to lie about 'having a boyfriend' to discourage men from pursuing her, etc.) serve as examples of the social dynamics she encounters, whereby her experience of this types of male machismo corresponds to forms of harassment, which she felt were much more explicit and invasive in Vietnam than in her country of citizenship. While this situation is not unique to Vietnam, Serena's adaptation strategies are distinct, particularly in light of the contradictory dynamics she encounters in different fields, whereby she performs a kind of femininity, which carries rewards in the Vietnamese cultural context, the practices she pursues in the nightclub scene (superimposed with her social position as a young white Western woman) incur challenges, which translate into adaptation imperatives. In the latter setting, Serena's perceived sexual availability (not being accompanied by a man) along with her age and looks make her a target for men, notably other expatriates, including those hoping to find in Vietnam the sexual playground they imagine Asia to be. Whereas, for Vietnamese men, albeit popular stereotypes about sexually liberal Western women, Serena is in her prime marrying age (according to Vietnamese standards), so the fact that she is at the club alone 'marks' her as sexually available. However, as she stands her ground against these sexual expectations and other dominant stereotypes, she reveals her subjective position. She is aware that the club scene is like a 'meat market' though she is navigating this field on her own terms, demonstrating a great deal of agency in the process of defying assumptions and stereotypes about Western women in Vietnam. Indeed, while she is disposed to complacency and graciousness in her public daytime life in Vietnam, in the nightclub

scene, she is rather defiant towards the pressures imposed by masculine motivations towards sexual conquest.

Serena's testimony is complex because on one hand she is readily engaged in the type of gender performance that (re)produces ideas about feminine congeniality, charm and gentleness –dominant gender norms in Vietnamese society. In the context of public life, she plays according to the rules of the game and enjoys it. On the other hand, she struggles against sexual scripts associated with her social position as a young sexually available expatriate woman who enjoys the nightlife, rebuffing the attention she gets as a participant in that field of practice. Easy access to alcohol and sex are a primary impetus for participation in this 'scene' for many men and women, which represents a normative dimension of the structure of the field. By choosing not to drink and by refusing to engage in sexualized relations/encounters, she understands that her position is atypical. Two separate fields, which are structured by differing sets of scripts (daytime public life and the nightclub scene), prompt Serena to adopt two seemingly opposite types of attitudes in order for her to 'maintain habitus coherence'.

4.4-. Conclusions

Sex and gender overlap with other factors of distinction such as age, occupational status, marital/relationship status, origin, life-stage, etc. Together, these factors of distinction and the constructs that reify such differentiations, influence the experiences of expatriates in Vietnam, notably what social positions they must negotiate, what roles they are expected to play or take-up, what social dynamics they will likely encounter, and how

challenges are perceived and dealt with. Interview narratives reveal substantive evidence that expatriates, women in particular, but also men whose responsibilities deviate from the construct of 'conventional roles', are required to engage in negotiations to make sense of their relative social positions, accommodate elements of habitus, and deal with engrained gender and sexual scripts (their own or those of Others). However, testimonies also reveal that expatriates deploy a wide range of adaptation strategies relatively consciously in various fields of practice, pointing to the situational character of gender performance. Adaptation as well as *cross-cultural* adjustments are gendered processes that entail:

a) Adjusting or modulating one's personal gendered expectations –as a form of self actualization or habitus (re)configuration –especially when/if expatriation also coincides with a life-stage or lifestyle transition;

b) Compensating for, or counter-balancing, the effects of a loss or a shortfall related to the local structural and cultural conditions and to the adaptation imperatives that prompt contextual performances (gendered, domestic, familial, professional, etc.), -notably when challenges occur, affecting life satisfaction or the conduct of activities that are linked to personal needs and desires;

c) Accommodating key gendered dispositions (along with other overlapping dispositions) to maintain habitus coherence, in line with key markers of subjective identities and the internalization of particular construct that reify differentiations;

d) Developing familiarity with gendered expectation and stereotypes, which in turn may help in overcoming relational and practical hurdles in daily life and improving one's understanding of the host country culture; and

e) Enacting/adopting practices by modulating behaviors and carrying out activities according to local gendered scripts, incurring symbolic rewards, or avoiding sanctions.

Expatriate adaptation is therefore a gendered process, though it is also personal and highly subjective. The analysis of expatriates' gendered social positions and dispositions reveals how habitus is subjectively mobilized in the process of adaptation. When dispositions are in line with local gender scripts and expectations, expatriates are likely to 'adapt' in minimal ways, by relying on their habitual behavioral tendencies, notwithstanding minor adjustments in the conduct of practice or in the deployment of forms of capital. However, when new roles or social positions are not in-line with dimensions of habitus or when local structural forces impose new and foreign sets of social conditions on habitus, expatriates are confronted to adaptation imperatives.

Still, it is common for local gender dynamics to be intertwined with sexual, class and racial/ethnic forms of differentiation. Still, much remains to be unraveled to understand how gender intersects with other markers of differentiation such as marital/relationship status and sexual orientation, in the process of expatriate adaptation. The next chapter in considering new layers of differentiation highlights the complexity of sexual dynamics amongst expats, and between them and host country nationals. Chapter 4 engages with key themes pertaining to gendered and sexualized constructs/relations, and to power dynamics that recall colonial arrangements and imagery.

Chapter 5

EXPATRIATE SEXUALITIES: PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES

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5.1-. Survey results and historical considerations on expatriates' sexual practices

Whilst gender and sexual orientation are interrelated factors of distinction that also overlap with marital status, class, race/ethnicity, and national origins, not to mention age, all of these constitute markers of differentiation that are constitutive of habitus and which serve as the basis of practice. In a postcolonial setting like Vietnam, sexual subjectivities will also be embedded in the multifaceted configuration of power relations involving gender, race/ethnicity and class, emanating from predominant patriarchal and hetero-normative structural forces. This chapter reviews cross-cultural sexual expectations, involving expatriates and host country nationals, looking at models of endogamous/exogamous practices and highlighting their historical rootedness and present-day re-enactments. This chapter also proposes an understanding of sexual differentiations, which is deeply rooted in habitus and identity correlates, and which problematizes expatriate adaptation in light of heteronormative assumptions about Western expatriates' sexualities. The articulation sexual orientation as marker of differentiation shows that bisexual and homosexual identities are negotiated subjectively within the context of Vietnam's structural and cultural conditions. Expatriate adaptation

will therefore be influenced by the unique social position and dispositions of expatriates as they experience and engage in located sexual realities.

Along with considerations on gender constructs/scripts, there is ground to investigate and legitimate the role of sexual practices and sexuality in expatriates' experiences overseas. In fact, the paucity of research on the link between sexual practices and sexuality, and expatriate adaptation overseas is somewhat surprising considering the importance of sexual relations and intimacy in people's everyday life, in alleviating stress, isolation, loneliness, and in providing companionship through daily challenges, and potentially, providing greater life satisfaction. Sexuality and sexual practices represent an area of research that has not received a great deal of attention in the field of migration and transnationalism, except perhaps in the area of sex trafficking and sex tourism. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, there are connections that ought to be made between gender, sexual orientation and sexual practices, and expatriates' experiences, and which must be discussed first as postcolonial continuities.

As Fechter (2010) explains, there is a wealth of research and sociological critiques addressing the power relations and structural inequalities born of colonial/imperial domination, although scarce scholarly effort has been invested in linking this scholarship to the continued presence of foreigners in postcolonial developing countries.

> In recent years, the interdisciplinary fields of colonial and postcolonial studies have been enriched by nuanced analyses of the ways in which racialised [sic] colonial identities (cross-cut by gender, class and sexuality) have been enacted in particular settings. Nevertheless, the quantity and quality of knowledge about the lives of European colonials and settlers can be held in stark contrast with the relative scarcity of studies of those

> who might be regarded as their modern-day equivalents: contemporary 'expatriates', or citizens of 'Western' nation-states who are involved in temporary migration processes to destinations outside 'the West'. (Fechter & Walsh, 2010: 1197)

Few researchers in the field of migration and transnational studies have attempted to analyze the continuities that shape the practices of expatriates in such receiving contexts, along with the cross-cultural dynamics that emanate from their relations with locals.

> [W]hile there exists ample scholarship on 'colonial expatriates'–such as European colonial officers, settlers, merchants, and their families–the analytical frameworks that have proven fruitful for their study have not been systematically related to those who appear, at least on the surface, to lead similar lifestyles, namely corporate, diplomatic or development expatriates who move from European and North American countries to developing ones, including former colonies. This lack appears even more puzzling given the availability of powerful concepts to scrutinize the maintenance, negotiation and disruption of colonial power relations. (Fechter, 2010: 1280)

There are a few important sources that discuss colonial/imperial gender relations and sexual practices in Southeast Asia (Sherzer, 1998; Stoler, 2002; Chaudhuri, 2004; Firpo, 2007; Saada, 2007; Medcalf, 2009; Peters, 2009); though fewer still demonstrate a historical continuity to interrogate the post- or neo-colonial nature of expatriate practices outside the West today, (Fechter & Walsh, 2010) notably the pervasive constructs that feed into fantasies on the sexual docility and availability of the exotic Other. This body of scholarship reveals the pivotal importance of sexuality, notably in the configuration of power relations involving privileged white Westerners and (post)colonial subjects, as well as the complex interplays and negotiations, which are born of evolving cross-cultural struggles and located politico-economic interests. It also highlights how sexuality and practices of Othering are entwined and often difficult to disentangle from the

underlying intersubjective sensibilities of actors in relation to gender, class and race/ethnic relations.

This represents a critical starting point to evaluate whether and how expatriates' patterns of practice today correspond to the colonial and imperial practices of yesteryears; while interrogating the social meanings and practical implications of sexual practices/relations in relation adaptation processes. With this in mind, we ought to ask how exogamous sexual practices may incur challenges, and/or serve simultaneously as adaptation strategies; how heteronormative dynamics are configured amongst expatriates, and between expatriates and host country nationals, and how alternative sexual identities are negotiated within the receiving society.

Survey results are helpful in uncovering key markers of social positions and patterns of practice for the sample of respondents. While the great majority (94.6% of N=280 responses) reported being 'straight' (heterosexual), 5.4% indicated being either gay/lesbian (homosexual) or bisexual (2.5% and 2.9% respectively). Also, on N=295 responses, 43.4% of survey respondents reported being either single or separated/divorced, compared to 56.6% of respondents who reported being married, remarried, or in a spousal relationship with someone (common law, engaged or committed). On N=286 responses, 21% reported being in a spousal relationship with a Vietnamese national at the time of completing the survey, of which, 91.7% were men and only 8.3% were women. This reveals an interesting gender difference in sexual practices related to exogamy vs. endogamy, one that may be rooted in both history and patriarchal ideology.

Expatriates were also asked –if/when single, what their dating preferences are. On N = 120 responses, 54.2% reported a preferences for dating other expatriates (with a gender ratio of 81.5% women and 18.5% men), 11.7% reported a preference for Vietnamese nationals (all men) and 34.2% would be interested in either option (with a gender ratio of 29.3% women and 70.7% men). Such significant discrepancies speak to two important issues surrounding Western-Vietnamese gender-cross-cultural encounters, both of which are reminiscent of postcolonial sexual dynamics: 1) the propensity of expatriate men to engage in exogamy with Vietnamese nationals, and 2) gendered-cross-cultural conditions that denote the fact that expatriate women and Vietnamese men are less inclined to form relationships.

Western expatriate men in Vietnam have a history of exogamy. In the case of heterosexual exogamy involving white European men and Vietnamese women, a critical analysis of colonial archives suggest that host country women were often depicted through an amalgam of representations, as 'oriental subjects' and 'sexual objects', as an imagined and commoditized 'exotic femininity' available for the taking. In

> the colonies, colonizers and colonized were in very intimate contact; native women were available and became sexual partners as the colonizers desired it. The colonies were places where the French appropriated land, goods and women, and in fact one of the incentives for going to the colonies was the promise of adventures, which entailed unlimited access to women. Postcards, posters and advertisements from the period enticed prospective colonizers, travellers [sic] and soldiers by displaying native women and young girls. Exotic sexual encounters were part of the 'imaginaire colonial' [colonial imaginary]. (Sherzer, 1998: 105-106)

In the early years of French domination in Indochina, incoming colonizers were mostly men (admirals, soldiers, bushmen, engineers, builders, and planners) and it is reported

that Indochina was often described as a 'male haven' (Cooper, 2000) where dominant white males had their pick of indigenous women, whom were mostly depicted as subservient and virtuous. (Tracol-Huynh, 2010) Cooper (2000) argues however that exogamy involving male colonizers and colonized 'indigenous' (Indochinese/ Vietnamese) women was a source of anxieties.

> Ann L. Stoler has written persuasively about the ways that ideas of sexual purity and the avoidance of external pollutions – a central feature of bourgeois moral selfdiscipline [sic]– were paired with binary opposites constituted by the presumed depravity and uncontrolled eroticism of colonial people of color. The long Western fascination with the harem, and the actual practice of otherwise respectable colonial officials keeping "native" mistresses, fueled the imaginations of colonizers and European administrators worried about their nationals "going native." They were encouraged to write laws for their colonies that segregated colonizers and colonized peoples, denied citizenship to non-Europeans or people of mixed race, and prescribed family and pedagogical regimes for colonists of an archetypal "Dutchness", "Frenchness" or "Englishness" that existed nowhere in the home country, but that became, for everyone, models for comportment (Stoler, 1995: 107–11). (Meade & Wiesner-Hanks, 2004: 17-18)

Yet the problem of segregation in the face of proximity also speaks to an underlying oxymoron in colonial expatriates' social position, within fields of colonial practice/relations. Efforts to regulate proximity, such as efforts to regulate prostitution[145] and exogamous unions in Indochina, serve as evidence of a dialectic involving racial/class anxieties, orientalist fantasies and often, a 'complex' of patriarchal/chauvinist superiority.

[145] According to Tracol-Huynh (2010), "prostitution was part of the colonial order and that the whole colonial encounter was embodied in the sexual encounter between European men and native women (Tracol-Huynh, 2010). This encounter was partly distorted because it took place in quite a 'phantasmatic' [sic] world (Norindr, 1996) and also because it resulted from an unequal situation. […] The regulation of prostitution illustrates the fear of the French colonial authorities of the blurring of racial boundaries at the very foundations of the colonial order. (Tracol-Huynh, 2010: S74)

As a manifestation of this 'complex', there is compelling evidence that French colonizers systematically and regularly raped Vietnamese women, and that they colluded with the Chinese to kidnap Vietnamese women to sell them in China and Singapore. (Peters, 2009) Meanwhile in French literature, a number of fiction authors exploited the imagery of the colonial sexual adventurer, engaged in conquest and the sexual consumption of 'eroticized' indigenous (Vietnamese/Indochinese) women as booty. (Cooper, 2000) Though, in reality, the proximity of colonizers and colonized was bound to entail, in some cases, the formal union of foreign men and Vietnamese women (Sherzer, 1998), despite regulations that attempted to prohibit inter-ethnic marriages between the French and Indochinese.

Of course, such anxieties were born of a paradoxical relation to the Other, insofar as colonialism entailed interactions and practices that blur the boundaries between ruling and fraternizing.[146] Here, the work of Stoler (1995, 1997a, 1997b and 2002) is informative insofar as it highlights the role of state intervention and policy administration within colonies, notably in producing regimes of sexuality, "sometimes supporting white men sleeping with native women and at others importing white women to save the colonizer from "degeneration"." (Nelson, 1997: 385) Stoler (2002) argues that gender inequalities and colonial racism are two sides of the same coin, and that together they secured the power of imperial authorities, notably in matters of sexual control, which helped to crystallize the categories of colonizer and colonized. As such, "gender-specific

[146] The establishment of colonial authority over 'colonized others' underscores the exercise of power: notably the power to punish and reward subjects, thus the power to ensure obedience, which inevitably extends to sexual subservience, which implies de facto proximity between colonizers and colonized. This authority also imparts status and privilege to colonizers, and in turn, it may also impart forms of social capital to colonized subjects that 'willingly consort' with them.

sexual sanctions and prohibitions not only demarcated positions of power but also prescribed the personal and public boundaries of race." (Stoler, 2002: 42) Indeed, the "risks" of inter-ethnic proximity extend from the imposition of exploitative forms of domination, combined with the internalization of assumptions about indigenous Others, through cross-cultural –Orientalist and racializing– prejudices combined with visceral desires that are constitutive of key dimensions of the patriarchal habitus.

> Anxieties over proximity between colonised [sic] and coloniser [sic] in Indochina focused notably on sexual relations between white males and native women, and on what in Indochinese parlance came to be known as "encongayement." The term derives from the Vietnamese term for the female concubine of a white male: the *con gaï*, which [… referred to the] widespread practice of taking an indigenous lover […]. A frequent feature of metropolitan fiction, the *con gaï* represents an Indochinese version of the traditional and mythologised indigenous woman: the compliant sexual conquest of the dominant white male coloniser [sic]. The stereotypical image of the *con gaï*, or "Eve asiatique," is most fully and succinctly elaborated in a popular colonial song of the period, "Petite Tonkinoise," which vulgarized the myth of the submissive and malleable Indochinese *con gaï*. (Cooper, 2000: 752-753)

This makes Vietnam a host country where expat-Vietnamese sexual relations are inscribed in historical precedents, and more generally in structural forces that influence the costs and rewards of endogamy and exogamy.

Indeed 'colonialism' was a highly gendered, racialized and sexualized enterprise.[147] Cooper adds that the

> indigenous woman was portrayed as one of the prizes or rewards due to the colonising [sic] male: in a symbolic sense, she represented the possession of the conquered country [… Par.] Indeed many of these

[147] "It has been written that the colonial encounter was a masculine adventure, a 'male power fantasy' in which native women 'express unlimited sensuality, . . . are more or less stupid, and above all . . . are willing' (Said 1979, 207). In official discourses or in colonial novels, colonisation [sic] was essentially the meeting of White men and native women (Copin, 1996; Malleret, 1934)." (Tracol-Huynh, 2010: S74)

> liaison were discussed in [literary production] in terms of commodity/consumer relationship. Even the least attractive, and lowliest of metropolitan males could be assured of "getting" is indigenous lover. (Cooper, 2000: 753)

And this may also have included homosexual exogamy. Few studies actually address the issue of homosexual practices involving colonizers and indigenous actors. Although power dynamics between colonizers and colonized do not preclude the possibility and probability of such sexual encounters.

> The relationship between the colonizer and colonized was seldom, if ever, an egalitarian one. Colonial domination clearly played a role in liaisons between Europeans and non-Europeans, homosexual as well as heterosexual, with Europeans exchanging power, privileges, status, and money for sexual favors. Some relationships differed little from prostitution or included coercion and violence, yet many indigenous men could derive material and emotional advantages in the form of income, social promotion, or closer association with the colonial ruling order from partnerships with Europeans. It would be illogical to suppose that none of the relationships involved affection, the pleasure of companionship, or love. (Aldrich, 2002: 202)

Archival research reveals that few historical accounts touch on the occurrence of homosexual encounters between foreigners and Vietnamese during the colonial period. Jacobus X (1898) reports that during colonial times the French and the Chinese used the services of young Vietnamese boys who were divided into two age categories: the *Nays* were between seven and 15 years old and worked as 'basket carriers' and the *Valets*, recruited from the *Nays* were between 15 and 25 years of age. These Annamite boys are reported to have provided fellatio and more rarely, to receive sodomy. (Pastoetter, 2000) Aldrich (2002) provides an informative account on homosexuality during the French colonial era, notably in Vietnam, where it was reported by Jacobus X that

> [t]he Frenchman in Indochina 'could become a sodomite or a pederast because he found, without even having to search for them, women and children who presented him with the opportunity.' Thus, the Indochinese had corrupted Europeans, especially in the early colonial period when there was a scarcity of European women. (Aldrich, 2002: 204)

This statement only reifies the problematic conceptualization of the "civilized colonizer" and his "vulnerability" in the face of the "savage" and "morally corrupt" practices of the colonized. 'Scapegoating' the Other is therefore a long-standing practice of Othering, which easily confounds gender, class and race/ethnicity.

Representations and practices of Othering are epitomized not only against homosexuals, but also in racial terms in Jacobus X's reports, which highlight the deficient morals of "Indochinese natives" with regards to their willingness to engage in homosexual practices.[148]

> Although Jacobus X. was vague about the period to which he referred, he noted that boys were available in more or less open meeting-places, including male brothels cum opium dens in the suburbs of Saigon. He also cited the case of one of his old school friends, a Navy officer, who developed a 'deplorable reputation because of his too little concealed taste for boys'. (Aldrich, 2002: 204-205)

It is difficult therefore to imagine that colonial exogamy, articulated as inter-ethnic heterosexual or homosexual encounters, could have emerged as 'naturally egalitarian'. Though it is probably more productive to conceive of the configuration of colonial gender and sexual dynamics as a highly uneven process of negotiations between

[148] Exert from Jacobus X –cited in Aldrich (2002): "One must not think that the depraved Asiatic feels any repugnance whatsoever to engaging in this turpitude [fellatio]. He has even less than the *belle de jour* who performs the same operation. Whether the European reclines in a long planter's chair or lies on his bed, the boy, kneeling or squatting, *kisses and sucks his penis, and takes the emitted semen into his mouth, down to the last drop*" (Aldrich, 2002: 204 [the words in Italics were originally published in Latin])

colonizers and colonized (each with their own convictions about Others), entailing subtle and intricate tensions and forms of collaborations and contestations.

Conversely, there is little in the way of literature on exogamy between colonial expatriate women and "Indochinese actors" for their presence was sought to thwart inter-ethnic exogamy.

> Gender issues and gendered positionings of France and Indochina were further complicated with the arrival of female settlers to Indochina. Women settlers were encouraged to emigrate as wives of *fonctionnaires*, and by the 1920s made up a significant proportion of the settler population in Indochina. As early as 1897 the *Société française d'émigration des femmes* was founded [… and] functioned as a placement agency. (Cooper, 2000: 755)

The *Société française d'émigration des femmes* provided employment in the colonies as well as funding to facilitate departure and resettlement, though it served primarily as a marriage bureau, aiming to match up French colonial envoys with 'respectable' French women. By the 1930s, thanks in part to propaganda, the proportion of women finally reached 40% of the expatriate population in Indochina. (Medcalf, 2009) European women under colonial conditions faced stringent social expectations linked to their gender role and status, notably to deter the 'French man' from the risks of debauchery, provide him with a stable and loving home, to uphold the moral standards of the 'fatherland', and to raise and maintain French (European) dignity.[149] (Cooper, 2000) In a vivid rendering of such dynamics, Stoler (2002) begins *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial*

[149] "First, although the colony was intended to provide an outlet for male energy, it is certain that the colonial authorities did not primarily understand Indochina's role as a outlet for French sexual energy. The dissipation of that colonial "virilité" and energy through sexual adventures clearly distracted from the work ethic of *mise en valeur*. Second, the collapsing of boundaries separating civilised [sic] from uncivilised [sic] would shatter the framework of colonial hierarchies. If the representative of the superior power showed himself to be sexually and morally weak, then colonialism's objective to civilise [sic] was undermined. (Cooper, 2000: 755)

Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule by citing George Hardy, an instrumental figure in the development of French colonial educational policy: "A man remains a man as long as he stays under the gaze of a woman of his race." This attitude and related policies capture

> a set of assumptions and anxieties about life in the colonial tropics for European men and the European women recruited to follow and care for them. Its conditional clause signals a caution: racial vigilance and virility were domestic and household affairs, and vulnerabilities of body and mind were tightly bound to the conjugal and sexual arrangements in which Europeans lived. (Stoler, 2002: 1)

In this sense, sexual governance explicitly targets both colonizer and colonized, albeit the contradictions that in principle "the unspoken norm [was that] European men should "take on" native women not only to perform domestic work but to service their sexual needs, psychic well-being and physical care." (Idem) As such, tensions emerging from European women's presence in the colonies can be linked to a form of 'disciplinary repression', which they were expected to exert on male settlers. (Cooper, 2010)

Adjacently, Fechter (2010) points out that white Western women have played an active part in the exploitation of 'native labor', and in the reproduction of structural inequalities that placed them as 'colonial masters' and their 'native counterparts' as servants, maids, assistants, entertainers, chauffeurs, gardeners, nannies, etc. And this, in many ways, still rings true as per the potential power dynamics between middle-upper class Western expatriates (men and women) and host country nationals working as 'domestic help'.[150] Adjacently, European women in colonial contexts have also been

[150] Some authors go as far as attributing the demise of the empire to the arrival of women, (see works cited in Fechter 2010) whose presence served to further divide colonizers and colonized. By reproducing an

known to challenge the imperial social order, as a masculine enterprise entailing dominance, authoritative control, and paternalism.[151]

> It has been generally acknowledged that Western women's involvement in colonial enterprises was far more complex and contradictory than the dichotomy of being either 'victims' or 'villains' indicates. […] And, while Chaudhury and Strobel suggest considering both women's complicity with colonialism and their resistance to it (1992: 5), Formes (1995) argues that it is paramount to view these women in frameworks beyond their 'complicity and resistance', and develop more nuanced accounts of their roles and positions. (Fechter, 2010: 1291-1292)

While some representations of expatriate women in the colonies may coincide with an idealized conception of the strong, supportive, industrious and child-bearing spouse, which is in line with colonial 'expectations', other comparative perspectives have been articulated around assumptions concerning the materialism, vanity, superficiality, laziness, and sexual jealousy of expatriate women, versus the compliance, naturalness, modesty, and simplicity of indigenous women. (See for example Georges Groslier's 1928 *Le Retour à l'argile*, cited in Cooper, 2000). Sexualized representations of women are grounded in stereotypes, on the construction of oversimplified models or categories of being that tend to abstracts the subjective ways in which women (expatriate and host country) negotiate their relative social positions and correlate social expectations in various fields of practice.

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exclusive white-Western 'petite bourgeoisie' in Indochina and reiterating class divides between the French colonial class and indigenous 'others', some authors believe that women have impeded the growth of the empire and the development of more productive models of colonial inter-ethnic relations. (Louis Roubaud, 1931; cited in Cooper, 2000)

[151] "As Bulbeck argues, 'the ''masculine'' ethos of the imperial era–characterized by hierarchy, authority, control and paternalism–had to be replaced by what might be seen as more ''feminine'' modes required for the ''family of nations''–sympathetic understanding, egalitarian rather than authoritarian relations, diplomacy and flexibility' (Bulbeck, 1988: 244)." (Fechter, 2010: 1291)

In considering the legacies of both Indochina wars, we cannot neglect the intersections of race/ethnicity, nationality, and sex in warfare. As such, Nagel (2003) describes the "military-sexual complex" as a phenomenon, which takes many form, but which always involves sexual inter-ethnic encounters between armed forces personnel and local 'indigenous' populations. "Cross-national marriages may be one of the less exploitative forms of this complex, which often involves systematic rape and institutionalized prostitution." (Hidalgo & Bankston, 2008: 172) While some of the wartime sexual encounters between Westerners and Vietnamese resulted in long-term unions, this is only one side of the coin.[152] The excesses and often-belligerent behavior of Western expatriates, notably servicemen who served during the Vietnam-American war (in the 60s and early 70s), were also highly visible, including rampant drug and alcohol consumption, conspicuous sexual promiscuity and a high demand for local prostitutes.[153] (Yarborough, 2005)

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[152] It was relatively common for American military servicemen to take on a 'Vietnamese war bride'. (Hidalgo & Bankston, 2008) Based on 1980 census data involving a sub-sample composed of 42,944 Vietnamese women and 32,983 Vietnamese men living in the United States, 33.3% of Vietnamese women in America were in a spousal relationship with a Vietnam-American war veteran, of which 61.9% were non-Vietnamese, while only 1.8% of Vietnamese men were in a spousal relationship with a female Vietnam-American War veteran though all of their spouses were of ethnic Vietnamese origin. Thus confirms that exogamy between Vietnamese men and Western women was highly unlikely then.

[153] "Tu Do street in Saigon was lined with whorehouses, and in many areas in Vietnam, pimps on motorcycles would carry Americans to prostitutes and back. The women cost about $3-$5. According to "The XY Factor: Sex in the Vietnam War," a 2003 documentary on the History Channel, at many U.S. bases prostitutes sold hashish, heroin and blow jobs through base fences. […] Americans could get "rent-a-girls," paying a woman a flat rate to live with them for a week, month or year. [… Par. …] After one-third of the GIs [at An Khe military base] contracted venereal diseases, the compound [known as "Disneyland East"…], was established[, consisting of forty concrete whorehouses behind barbed wire and patrolled by military police]. There a "quickie" cost $2.50-$5, and prostitutes were required to carry "entertainers' cards" and were given regular health checkups by U.S. doctors to ensure disease-free sex for U.S. troops. […]. [Par.] Venereal disease rates were so high during the Vietnam war [sic]–twenty-eight cases for every 100 men serving there– that [… a] slang term arose among GIs –P.C.O.D., for "Pussy Cut-Off Date." Because no one was allowed to leave Vietnam for America until their VD was cured, men would try to abstain from sex for several weeks beforehand. [… Par.] American military personnel didn't own brothels,

Drawn from popular culture, it is easy to recall a number of Hollywood 'Vietnam War' movies that depict images recalling colonial chauvinism through the caricatured practices of military men. The most explicit renditions include *Full Metal Jacket*'s depiction of Vietnamese prostitutes and the sexual appetite of military men, and *Casualties of War,* which is based on actual events (known as The incident on Hill 192) involving the kidnapping of a Vietnamese girl and her brutal sexual enslavement and subsequent murder at the hands of American soldiers. In reference to 'real life events' during the American-Vietnam War, testimonies confirm that in some instances Vietnamese women have been victim of rape at the hands of expatriates living and working in Vietnam, and that sexual exploitation/commoditization at the hands of foreign forces was quite common. (Yarborough, 2005; Belknap, 2002) In various ways, the sexual relations/practices of expatriates speak volumes about how they negotiate their social positions, how they manifest their internalized sense of entitlement and superiority, and how they relate to host country nationals.

Still today, as survey responses suggests, exogamy may still serve as a key interface for cross-ethnic and cross-cultural encounters, but during the Vietnam-American war, important social transformations in the West may also have influenced expatriates' disposition towards exogamy.

> While under French rule, marriages of French soldiers and Vietnamese women were prohibited. American soldiers, on the other hand, could

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"but some American civilians did," […]. [Par.] In Vietnamese culture premarital chastity for women had always been strictly enforced. Little was known there then about birth control, and there were none of the modern birth control pills and devices that began appearing in America in the late 1960s and the 1970s. As for condoms, most men were unwilling to use them especially with prostitutes. [… Par. …] Out in the countryside, there were sometimes brutal rapes during village burning and massacres, some of which must have resulted in births." (Yarborough, 2005: 18-19)

> marry. A U.S. Army study of sixty-four Gis who had filed applications to marry Vietnamese girls between June 1964 and November 1966 concluded that a high proportion of Gis who married Vietnamese women were [previously] divorced, sexually inhibited, fearful of American women, or disenchanted with some aspects of American life (Marnais, 1967). (Pastoetter, 2000)

Sexual dynamics between Westerners and Vietnamese nationals cannot be completely isolated from structural and cultural conditions in America. Cross-cultural sexual encounters during the Vietnam-American War were modulated in part by the sexual revolution that was taking hold in the West. The feminist movement was certainly destabilizing the patriarchal masculine habitus in the West –incurring 'disenchantment' for many Western men. The sexual liberation of women has helped engendered many interrelated transformations in the West, including the massive entry of women onto the waged-labor market and their heightened enrolment in tertiary-level education, the relative decrease in women's economic dependence on men, a rise in the number of divorce, the increase demand on male spouses to contribute to household and child rearing duties, a shift in women's spousal attitude from 'obedience and subservience' to 'egalitarian consultation and cooperation', not to mention the massive take-up of contraception methods to allow for better family planning and increased sexual freedom.

Adjacently, these transformations and reactionary resistance to change created paradoxical dynamics, which delineated the terms of involvement for American military servicewomen in Vietnam.[154] In short, the United States Army revised and loosened its

[154] Out of the 2,594,000 personnel on duty within the borders of South Vietnam (between January 1st 1965 and March 28th 1973), 7,484 were servicewomen (83.5% as nurses). (Golden Brigade Chapter of the 82nd Airborne Division Association, 2012)

recruitment criteria for married women and mothers, although nursing still constituted the main entry point for women in the military, representing

> traditionally feminine characteristics such as nurturing and care-giving. Sexuality, always a component of gender definitions, further complicated American women's status in Vietnam and called into question their motives for being in a war zone despite their holding accepted roles as nurses. [… Par. … In line with gender conventions, and despite important social changes on the home front,] the ANC [Army Nurse Corps] also enforced traditional definitions of femininity, illustrating the limits of the Army's willingness to push gender boundaries. [Par.] To address concerns about nurses maintaining a feminine appearance in Vietnam, several hospitals included beauty salons. Debates over nurses' uniforms pitted practicality against femininity. [… Par.] The debate over nurses' clothing and appearance may seem superficial, but [… it is] a window on the gender tensions that developed as the Army tried to balance its attempts to adapt to ideological changes on the home front with deeply ingrained expectations about how women should look and act in a war zone. (Stur, 2010: 262-264)

While expatriate military women were negotiating a social position imbued in contradictions, Vietnamese women were represented as archetypes of feminine simplicity and sexual availability, despite the circulation of provocative imagery that contradicted such depictions. Indeed, a controversial construction of Vietnamese femininity as 'virile' within the framework of 'national liberation' stands in contrast to dominant depictions of female sexual objectification. (Meade & Wiesner-Hanks, 2004)

> More seriously, the image of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong woman warrior with a rifle slung over her shoulder as she nursed her child merged images that the popular revolution, nationalism, and anti-imperialism US press found repugnant. The hybridity of the woman warrior – who looms large in Vietnamese as well as Chinese folklore – is particularly upsetting to those who find comfort in a strict separation of the roles the two sexes play. (Meade & Wiesner-Hanks, 2004: 179-180)

The oxymoron, however, is that outside the context of national liberation, Vietnamese culture was and still is, founded on traditional ideas, notably in terms of gender and

sexual expectations and assigned/prescribed social positions. As such, Vietnam may have seemed like a haven for more conservative heterosexual expatriate men seeking a *caricaturized* 'traditional lady' rather than new models of 'modern liberated Western women'.

> Confucian social formulas and moral strictures are central to Vietnamese society, which stresses the cultivation of virtuous conduct. […] Traditionally, women were subordinate to men in every stage of life: daughters to their fathers, wives to their husbands and in widowhood, to their sons. [… Par.] Since independence in 1945, the socialist transformation of Vietnamese society has emphasized women's equal capacity to participate in social and political life (Johansson, Nga, Huy, Dat, & Holmgren, 1998). However, […] while government policies have attempted to increase equality between women and men, they have simultaneously perpetuated traditional gender roles. The government considers women's traditional roles as mother and wife critical to the nation's […] stability (Gammeltoft, 1999). […] Government slogans often promote traditional Confucian female characteristics: Chastity, hard work and proper behavior. (Go et al., 2002: 468)

There is, therefore, an argument to be made, on the strong inclination of some Western expatriate men to choose a Vietnamese spouse, as a way to accommodate their gendered and sexual habituses, thereby engaging in practices that support, rather than confronts, their internalized patriarchal assumptions and expectations.

Even today, gendered and sexual expectations in Vietnam point to enduring inequalities that perpetuate sexist and chauvinistic conduct. Pervasive constructs about archetype femininity are internalized, and in turn, substantiate expectations about women's beauty, gentle nature, and their hardworking and subservient dispositions.[155]

[155] "Overall, deviations from social norms have family consequences that follow traditional gender roles. Women are expected to accept their husbands' deviations while men may select a range of socially acceptable responses to their wives' behavior: from forgiveness to physical punishment." (Go et al., 2002: 473)

Conversely, men emphasized the importance of loyalty and faithfulness[156] in their 'ideals' about women, on top of virginity, devotion and beauty. Although in the context of economic developments, Vietnamese men's and women's attitudes seemed to have become more tolerant regarding 'premarital sex', although it is still perceived as 'worse' for women compared to men (Mai Do & Hongyun Fu, 2010) –as a matter of feminine dignity.

By contrast, it is worth mentioning that still today, Vietnamese women may consider exogamy as an attractive option for a number of reasons, which I outline further. A recent article by Dang and Vu (2010), revealed that "[r]oughly 40,000 Vietnamese citizens married foreigners, including overseas Vietnamese […] between 2005-2008 based on statistics published by the justice department of Ho Chi Minh City. Furthermore, about 92 percent of these marriages occurred between Vietnamese females and foreigner or Viet Kieu males […]."(Dang & Vu, 2010) For Vietnamese women, marrying a foreign male may be alluring for many reasons. They may be interested in gaining material comforts and access to capital to help their parents and families. They may seek an escape from traditional culture or appreciate that foreign men (especially Westerners) have lesser requirements related to virginity, age, career ambitions,

[156]" ''A real and heroic man can have five wives and seven girlfriends but a virtuous woman only has one husband in her life''. (traditional Vietnamese proverb) […]All the men and women interviewed believed that ''it is more possible to forgive men than women'' for committing adultery." (Go et al., 2002: 474) The study revealed that extramarital sex on the part of a husband is often attributed to the wife's 'bad behavior'. "Although arguably the sexual reserve of women […] is thought to be encouraged by socialization in Vietnam in which reticence, gentility of manner, and obedience are emphasized for women but not for men (Gammeltoft, 2001; Rydstrom, 2003). In qualitative studies, women report feeling considerable anxiety about violating established moral norms and incurring social disapproval by engaging in premarital sex (Efroymson et al., 1997; Bélanger and Khuat, 1999; Gammeltoft, 2002; Go et al., 2002)." (Ghuman, 2005: 96)

education level,[157] background, parental approval, social status,[158] etc. Marrying a Western man especially, frees Vietnamese women of significant burdens related to maintaining her in-laws and their household. By marrying a Western man, whose parents are overseas, a Vietnamese woman can continue to care for her own parents and family. Moreover, she may well end-up with greater opportunities (school, work, travel, etc.). Vietnamese women may also seek opportunities to emigrate and to have international life-experiences. And of course, they may be lured by 'romance' and 'love'. (Dang & Vu, 2010) Furthermore, marrying a Western man who is willing to remain in Vietnam, would allow a Vietnamese woman to achieve a greater position of power and influence, by becoming indispensable to her husband, in helping him navigate the Vietnamese system, acting as translator, interpreter, advisor, etc. in many areas of public life. Finally, as Vietnamese women meet expatriates with progressive ideas about gender roles, they may be lured by the prospect of greater equality, respect, self-determination and reciprocity in the configuration of sexual and gender dynamics.

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[157] As per Vietnamese cultural conventions, "many women are forced to make the emotionally wrenching decision to sacrifice their education and, possibly, their long-range career plans for a relationship, or to continue their education in the hope that they will find love with a man of equal status or with one who is not so concerned about his wife's level of education (a very progressive-minded Vietnamese, an overseas Vietnamese, or another foreigner)." (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005: 76)

[158] Gender inequalities are reflected in gendered expectations related to educational attainment; for example Vietnamese "culture [still] frowns upon women who have "too much education" or are "too smart." In one instance, a woman with an M.B.A. from a prestigious U.S. university was unable to find a suitable position and ended up working abroad for an international government agency. In another case, a woman broke off her engagement with her M.A.-educated fiancé because he asked her to make a choice: either return with him to Vietnam and get married, or pursue a Ph.D. She chose the latter. [Par.] Not only is it difficult for women to find a position that matches their qualifications, but their level of education can actually make it difficult to get married. This is especially problematic in a country where women are on their way to becoming "old maids" by the time they reach their mid-twenties. […] In fact, the Vietnamese have an expression that means 'Girls need not study further because it would be hard to find husbands'." (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005: 75)

Conversely, Vietnamese nationals with traditional values may regard exogamy (involving a Vietnamese woman and a foreign man) as 'selling out'. In an online article published by a popular Ho Chi Minh City-based magazine, Vu Ha Kim Vy (2011) conducted a series of interviews on exogamy, and argues that:

> yes, some [Vietnamese] women need the money. They are being pragmatic, trying to gain a station in a life where none was given to them. They want to look 'cool', create an image of wealth and success, but in the process they are regarded as being cheap. It's inevitable. [Par.] But this feeling of being looked down upon, and being regarded as cheap is not at all easy for anyone who has to exchange their dignity for what they view as a better life. [… Par.] But even for those couples that are truly in love, there is still [many] who find the mixed-race relationship difficult to accept. [Par.] "Ok, I admit that many foreigners have good attributes and are in general well-educated," says 27-year-old Tam. 'But I cannot accept Vietnamese women coupling with western men. It's like being betrayed, betraying your roots and looking down on Vietnamese men.' (Vu Ha Kim Vy, 2011)

In such an ethnically homogenous society, where foreigners are regarded with weariness, after French colonialism and American interventionism, such sentiment is not surprising. Yet it seems that colonial and military patriarchal hetero-normativity has played a major role in the articulation of cross-cultural sexual encounters and that today, many Vietnamese women consider exogamy as a viable and interesting option for legitimate reasons, despite holding on to enduring traditional views regarding marriage and family.

Pastoetter (2000) remarks that in Vietnam, "grammar makes clear how important marriage is in […] society. Proschan (1998) provides this example: "When Vietnamese ask one another about their marital status they do not ask 'Are you married?' but 'Have you married yet?' A proper response is not a yes-or-no answer but the answer 'Already' or 'Not yet'." (Pastoetter, 2000) In Vietnamese society, as in most cultures, having

children ‘gives meaning’ to a person’s life. The centrality of family, and therefore of marriage and procreation in Vietnam is expressed also in one of the first questions Vietnamese nationals ask upon meeting anyone, including foreigners: once you’ve answered that you are married, Vietnamese nationals will ask “Do you have children yet?” reflecting this imperative, and the assumption that it is not a question of ‘if’ but rather, a question of ‘when’.

> The importance of family is a historic aspect of Vietnamese society, as with many Confucian societies in East Asia […], [whereas] the role of the father and parents in general is reinforced by cultural traditions, and family relations provide a general model for authority relations. Through history and changes in political and social regimes, the centrality of the family appears to be an enduring feature of Vietnamese society. Generally speaking, Vietnamese family structure is more complex than that of the Western-style family, which is essentially nuclear in nature […]. The Vietnamese immediate family includes not only the husband, wife, and their unmarried children, but also the husband’s parents and [… all their] sons’ wives and children […]. [Par. …] In the eyes of the children, the Vietnamese mother has the same status as the father. She is also the embodiment of love and the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice. [Par. …] Vietnamese elderly people never live by themselves or in nursing homes but with one of their children, usually their eldest son. [After the parents’ death t]his obligation […] survives in the form of ancestral cult and the maintenance of ancestral tombs. Ancestor worship is practiced in most, if not all, Vietnamese homes […]. (Nguyen Quy Thanh, 2003: 23-24)

Core beliefs associated to Confucian traditions play a crucial role as structural forces, notably in the configuration of power relations, the circumscription of roles and obligations and the setting of priorities in conventional Vietnamese families.

> The family is the most important social structure in Vietnamese society. The family also is the center of social life: most Vietnamese report weekly contact with parents or other relatives. […] Belief in a traditional role for women remains strong. A large majority say that a woman needs to have children (86 percent) and that housework is as fulfilling as working for pay (86 percent). (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005: 53-54)

Despite rapid social change affecting gender dynamics, especially in cities where modernization is spurring the diversification of women's roles in the waged labor force, the patriarchal character of conventional sexual relations and family structures is still quite pervasive in Vietnamese society. Conventional family values and the resulting gender dynamics that prevail within most Vietnamese households are deeply internalized as beliefs and convictions about the criteria of family respectability and as parenting norms, reflecting how the Vietnamese habitus reproduces a rather rigid gendered division of labor, which extends from key family roles. According to Pastoetter (2000),

> women's present leading role in primary-level education, as well as in health, is conceptualized as an extension of women's traditional role in the family: teaching children and caring for the sick. [Par.] As Pelzer White (1987) further points out, […] young men would never be allowed to train for careers as caretakers of very young children and infants. […] Even today, women face hostility from their husbands, and especially from their mother-in-laws, if they have higher status jobs. (Pastoetter, 2000)

As such, expatriates who are interested in exogamy with a Vietnamese spouse may be confronted to cross-cultural dissonances, affecting the dynamics within bicultural couples and family units.

Since sexuality and sexual relations are such an important aspect of everyday life-satisfaction, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to expatriates sexual practices and their implications on adaptation. As discussed, gender and sexual scripts, as well as related representations, stereotypes, social expectations as well as historical precedents, cannot be ignored in an analysis of expatriates sexual practices and preferences. Subjective social positions and dispositions are bound to color cross-cultural sexual encounters between expats and Vietnamese, and also amongst expats. With

regards to the adaptation process, it seems that both endogamy and exogamy can impart particular benefits while also incurring peripheral costs that go beyond instrumental advantages and disadvantages. As such, it is the meanings and practical as well as emotional implications of sexual practices that reveal how the experiences of expatriates are processed as highly subjective. In the following sections, respondents' narratives provide located and personalized accounts about their sexual and intimate encounters/relations, clarifying how marital status and sexual predilections might influence the perception of challenges and adaptive experiences.

5.2-. Between expats and sexpats: an exploration of sexual dynamics & practices

Respondent narratives drawn from survey open-ended questions, interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation records, revealed that expatriates perceive sexual dynamics in a manner which is contingent on their social position and sexual predilections (as a dimension of habitus). As such, their experiences are colored by the meanings and the practical and emotional significance that underlie the negotiation of located sexual dynamics.

Exogamy between Western expatriates and host country nationals for example, is a sexual practice, which is influenced by the status and social position (read also power and class) of the actors involved, along with their gender and sexual dispositions. Though it is also a means for expatriates to negotiate sexual desires outside the frame of constraints imposed by normative Western values. As discussed in the previous section, some expatriate men in Vietnam have a marked preference for Vietnamese (read also

Asian) women. Though the reasons for this may differ, at one end of the spectrum, there are those expatriates who may experience a deep sense of disillusionment towards the concept of gender equality, which has become pervasive in the West. During a participant observation session at a scheduled expatriate meeting, an informal encounter was quite instructive. The following is transcribed from the recording of part of a conversation I had with a candid, middle-aged, French-speaking white man:

> Rick [North American, middle-aged man]: See, I like Asian women because they are petite, so when I fuck them I feel bigger, strong and in control. They are also less hairy. […] They know their place and don't expect too much. […] I buy her a hat and she's happy… no need to buy her a car. […] Also, last time I went out with a Western woman, she got offended because I made her feel inferior. That doesn't happen with Asian girls. They know their place. […] Also, I am polygamous, and I don't want to negotiate that with a Western woman. Instead, I have a girlfriend in Laos, one in Vietnam and one in Thailand, and as long as each one feels she can rely on me to help out with family expenses, they'll put up with an open relationship and my coming and going. […] I've got money and I don't need to work, so I got my pick of women.

Two major themes emerge from this testimony. The first is centered on Rick's social position and the power dynamics he describes, denoting a sense of class superiority emanating from his reliance on monetary privilege, and his subjective need to feel a relative 'dominance' over women in general. The second revolves around the racial/ethnic construction of the Other, through his perceptions, notably the categories that pin a docile, submissive and financially needy Asian femininity in contrast to a demanding, strong, egalitarian Western femininity that is, according to him (and dominant tropes), "less feminine". Of course, this also speaks to a link between a 'patriarchal mentality' and the disillusionment incurred by the sexual revolution and women's liberation movement in the West. This expatriates' testimony is based on the

internalization of specific representations of women, portraying caricatured extremes that have little to do with the diversity of identities. His 'reality' is that of a privileged white male, living as a sexual adventurer who relishes having his pick of sexually available, and subservient women.[159] As a Westerner, and in relation to Western women particularly, his social position is less desirable, in that his economic clout may be less impressive for financially independent women, his 'masculine appeal' may be less pronounced due to his relatively small build compared to other Western men, while his preference for polygamy may be a deal-breaker for Western women, who may be less tolerant towards spousal infidelity (as a result of internalized dispositions towards institutionalized monogamy). As such, his positionality shifts when in relation to differentially positioned Vietnamese women, who may have other needs, values, priorities and expectations towards their husband/partner. In relation to Vietnamese women, Rick's positional markers, his age, economic means, physical attributes (whiteness, relative height/build compared to Vietnamese men), and origin, are constructed and work in his favor. Despite the importance of marriage in Vietnamese society, Rick succeeded in securing a Vietnamese sexual partner (among others) willing to engage in sexual relations out of wedlock, thanks to his willingness to help her financially. In their intersubjective encounters, every actor is engaged in negotiations that are contingent on both positionality and dispositional propensities.

[159] At the other extreme, we find reports of jealous Vietnamese women who resort to cutting off the penis of their cheating husbands and folkloric evidence that some Vietnamese women have a "reputation for being fierce spouses [… with] the nickname of Su Tu Ha Dong or 'Ha Dong Lionesses.' It is said about their husbands that they belong to a very ancient club, [known as] the "Society of Men Who Fear Their Wives." (Pastoetter, 2000)

Rick's attitude towards women in general, and Vietnamese women specifically is clearly in line with stereotypical neo-colonial gender and sexual scripts, which construct Asian femininity within the frame of orientalist conceptions. On one hand, Rick's testimony epitomizes blatant machismo and masculine desires of domination and conquest. On the other, Rick's narrative does represent a pervasive masculine attitude towards sexuality, characterizing what many expatriate men expect, or wish to find in Asia: a 'sexual playground', where sexually available women abound; where privileged white men can indulge in sexual escapades without constraint even if they are 'committed' or 'married'; and where local women, are imagined, constructed and socialized to fit male expectations of sexual willingness, compliance and congeniality, enabling 'sexualized encounters' to serve as 'booty': the reward afforded by their enhanced status as privileged white men. Farrer (2010) confirms that it is common for male expatriates in Asia to speak "animatedly about the multiple seductions of [the Asian sexual landscape and the] heady mix of easy sex and quickly developing business opportunities. Like the adventurers of the 1920s, [Shanghai, like many other major Asian cities can without doubt be perceived as] a cosmopolitan sexual playground, but now one with no racial bars." (Farrer, 2010: 1222)

I have witnessed countless situations involving expatriate men, who adopt the 'no strings attached' policy in their sexual encounters with both Vietnamese and expatriate women, explicitly to "have a little fun on the side" or to "live it up, while I still can." This is in fact the manifestation of an expat sexual and sexualized subculture that speaks to a particular pattern of sexual practices and correlate attitudes/dispositions (i.e. habituses).

Within this subculture, expats who adhere to such practices are commonly referred to as "sexpats." One particular Western expatriate, considered handsome by Western standards (a young man in his late twenties/early thirties, slim, tall, blond, with blue eyes, a good job and advanced Vietnamese fluency) confessed to having printed thousands of contact cards with his phone number and email, and distributing them to any 'hot Vietnamese girl', whilst delivering a standard pickup line to the effect of: "hey beautiful, call me if you want…" with the aim of attracting Vietnamese girls for casual sex. He explained that such a sharp pick up line was meant as a 'test', because he knew this approach deviated drastically from traditional Vietnamese forms of courtship, which are more subtle and delicate. In fact, this 'test', as he explained, was meant to spur on the women who had the confidence and 'guts' to pursue and compete for him: a man ascribed by women as a 'highly desirable' foreigner. This strategy was extremely successful by his own account. Though he explained that often, Vietnamese women wanted more than just casual sex, attempting to play the game of seduction to spur his interest. He explained that he was careful to make his intentions clear despite their efforts to monopolize his attention; and that sometimes he also had to 'break some hearts'. He also admitted that in some cases he may even struggle to get a girl off his back, denoting a divergence between the structure of his sexual practices, and the desires and expectations of some of the women he became intimate with. In time, he negotiated his connections to an extensive network of women, many of whom he could contact at his leisure, as 'friends with benefits'. In this environment where sexually available Vietnamese women seemed to abound, this expatriate thrived: he worked hard to achieve this notoriety, describing his life as

exciting, fun, free, etc., despite the punctual complications afforded by the emotional attachment and aspirations of his lovers. Surely, the fact that sexual tourism is on the rise across Asia, is peripheral to this case, although there may be a connection, which is underscored by a 'macho disposition' towards unbridled sexual consumption, producing a social phenomenon that is symptomatic of a clichéd construction of Asia as a sexual playground where male fantasies are played out, thanks in part to the participation of host country nationals, socialized in patriarchal and chauvinistic structural conditions and who acquiesce to perform or (re-)enact forms of (self- and social-)objectification. From these experiences, it seems, that exogamy as polygamous or polyamorous cross-cultural sexual encounters, is a strategic negotiation meant to satisfy uninhibited sexual desires, to realize the fantasies of neo-colonial sexual conquest, thereby reproducing a framework of racialized, sexualized and gendered dynamics between foreigners and host country nationals.

Adjacently, monogamous exogamy involving expat-Vietnamese relations also seems to underscore strategic adaptations, which incur relative challenges and benefits for either party. In other words, having a Vietnamese spouse or partner will have a direct impact on expatriates' living conditions in Vietnam, mitigating a number of difficulties while creating others. As Josh, a survey respondents explained: "The language is a challenge but I am intent on learning and improving. It helps to have a Vietnamese girlfriend!" While having a Vietnamese spouse/partner is an opportunity to learn the language and to gain insight into local cultural forms, it is also an asset in terms of navigating the intricacies of Vietnamese society (bureaucracy or market place bargaining

for example). However, other issues surrounding marriage formalities and cultural differences may arise, as Xavier, another survey respondent notes: "Getting the wedding papers in order was a proper nightmare, with numerous trips to the authorities!" And as Mark clearly explains in his survey response to question 75: "My wife is Vietnamese, so the challenges are the usual ones in a bi-cultural environment: values, education of children, relationship to money, etc." These peripheral challenges denote key tensions emanating from cross-cultural dynamics, as well as practical benefits and advantages that counter balance each other.

Therefore the subjective position of expatriate respondents who are in a monogamous spousal/committed relationship with a Vietnamese national is nuanced and highly contingent on the configuration of these advantages and challenges. In an interview, Jerome explicitly portrayed the complexity of his situation, notably the ups and downs of living and sharing his life with a host country national.

> Jerome [North American, middle age man with a younger Vietnamese wife]: [My wife] is such a great help. On top of maintaining the house, cooking amazing food, and taking care of our kids, she took care of all the government formalities to open our business. She is like my personal assistant and interpreter, a real right arm woman. […] She supports me in everything I do… [Laugh] Well almost!

The practical implications of having access to a Vietnamese spouse who serves as a "personal assistant" to her husband denote clear advantages in the conduct of daily-routine or out-of-the-usual activities in unfamiliar fields of practice/relations. Jerome, although initially disadvantaged as a foreigner who might not have known how to navigate the landscape of Vietnamese bureaucracy, knew how to capitalize on the help provided by his Vietnamese spouse, who concomitantly helped lighten the domestic

workload. Here, exogamy can be conceived as an adaptation strategy that alleviates the burden of unfamiliar social processes, while improving quality of life in specific ways. Conversely, cross-cultural tensions within the dynamics of a bi-cultural couple or a family can also be taxing.

> Interviewer: In your experience, what are some of the drawbacks of being in an intercultural relationship with a Vietnamese national?
> Jerome: Well, first there is having to deal with her overbearing mother. For a while we lived in the same building as my in-laws. We had no privacy whatsoever, they came by everyday, sometimes without ringing our doorbell, they would use the spare key we gave them for emergencies to come in at any time of the day or night. It was a nightmare! When she started to dictate how [… our first child] should be raised, […] I put an end to this. I want our kids to be half Vietnamese and half American, so we need to compromise, but she was taking total control. […] I needed to put some distance between our family unit and my in-laws. We decided to move to our own house at the other end of the city, my mother-in-law cried and cried, and tried to manipulate us into staying. [smirk] No way I said! In the West, there is a greater respect for privacy. […]

Cultural differences are bound to incur challenges within bi- or multi- cultural families or couples. Differences in worldviews and values, like the construct of, and subjective need for 'privacy', along with parallel prejudices/assumptions, are likely to contribute to tensions, frustrations that accumulate and culminate into tangible interpersonal problems. In turn, such issues can be dealt with in variety of way, from evasion (such as in the case of Jerome) to dialogical negotiation and conflict resolution.

> Interviewer: So that is one major issue, are there others?
> Jerome: Oh yeah, well there are lots of cultural differences that make married life a little difficult sometimes. See, [my wife] is pretty controlling and doesn't really have or even want a life beyond the family, so she doesn't get that I need a little bit of room to breath. She wants to know where I am and with whom at all times. She even checked on me randomly before, [cynical laughter] she sent a cousin or a friend, I can't remember exactly, to check if I was where I said I was and with the people I said I was with. [Smirk … Pause] I just couldn't believe it. […] She

> doesn't understand that I need space sometimes, that I like to have my own time and my own friends, men and [vocal emphasis on 'AND'] women. She is jealous about almost every women I become friends with, especially if they're single, or if she thinks I spend time alone with them. […]
> Interviewer: mmmh mmh, though jealousy exists in every culture don't you think?
> Jerome: This is not about jealousy so much as it is about control and invasiveness. I understand that she can be insecure. I do my best to reassure her. [Pause] What I struggle with is having to argue every time I want to do my own thing without her. […] In Vietnam the family is everything, […]. So you can't explain rationally that you need some time away. It's like turning your back on them. It's like incriminating, like you're having a double life. So when I do 'do my own thing', I have to put up with her pouting for days afterwards, [sigh] it's exhausting! [Sigh – Pause …] I even told her she can have her own time and her own friends and I'll stay home and watch the kids, but she won't have it. First she says she doesn't need it and then she argues that I won't be able to handle the kids by myself. See, again, that's an idea that comes from my mother-in-law. The first year after [… our first child] was born, my mother-in-law and my wife wouldn't even let me give [… him/her] a bath. […]

This segment of Jerome's interview demonstrates well how complex his situation is. He mentioned a number of frustrations, which can be attributed to cross-cultural dissonance. While he can rely on his wife in many ways, and while his choice to marry a Vietnamese woman imparts clear advantages, related to home ownership, household maintenance, childcare, business administration, and residency procedures and bureaucracy; at home, he struggles to have his needs for privacy, independence and personal space recognized, along with his ability/desire to take up a fuller fathering role. So if exogamy between expatriates and Vietnamese nationals serves as an adaptation strategy to hurdles encountered in a number of fields, cross-cultural dissonance between spouses or within bi-(or multi-)cultural families/households may impart compounded challenges in other fields of practice.

For Jerome, the centrality of the family in Vietnam, and his perception of his wife's possessiveness and insecurities, hinders his individualistic disposition towards 'self-fulfillment' beyond the family. In the same time, his need for privacy as it pertains to 'in-law intrusiveness' speaks to his disposition towards the nurturing of a conventional nuclear family format –a prevailing Western construct, rather than the usual Vietnamese inclination towards 'extended family' formats within a single household or residential unit/block. Jerome's narratives reveals key dimensions of 'his habitus' through the expression of values, desires, preferences, and forms of annoyance. Jerome's is engaged in a process of negotiation, whereby he is contesting and trying to modulate the terms of his relationships with his Vietnamese wife, his Amerasian children, and his Vietnamese in-laws. Some of his social practices are embedded in such negotiations, as he struggles to find a balance between family life and personal desires/motivations. However, his role as 'man of the house', extending from his social position still allows him to 'take control' of certain dimensions of household management, such as the final decision to 'move' away from his in-laws' residence.

Meanwhile, other expatriates may perceive situations like that of Jerome's as undesirable, based on their own preferences for a relationship where personal space, freedom and fulfillment are pivotal to a healthy intimate relationship –based on Western values of individuality and mutual respect. Therefore Western dispositions related to sexual/spousal expectations are clearly mobilized in the decision to engage, or not, in exogamous sexual practices. It suffices for an expatriate to perceive some of the difficulties encountered by other expatriates to formulate a judgment on the dynamics

that underlie these unions, notably, a shift in power, which may occur after marriage, and which may prompt some Vietnamese women to become more assertive within a family dynamic. In a discussion thread online, a web-user reports:

> Seriously, no offense to Vietnamese women in general, but Vietnamese women are very, very controlling and micro-managing. I know [this… because I have] numerous friends who have stereotypical Vietnamese wives. They tend to micro-manage and control how their husbands think and act. […] I have seen this in Vietnamese women very extensively. (Thunderbird, 2011)

The issue surrounding such judgments revolves around the propensity to formulate generalizations relating to perceived sexual and spousal dynamics between expatriates and host country nationals, models of representation of an archetype that completely abstract the subjective negotiations of the actors involved. Of course, within families and couples, power plays will be determined by positionality, dispositions and relative access to forms of capital. So when Vietnamese women are perceived by others to have power and significant control over her husband or family affairs, it seems to 'go against' the 'typical representation', which paints them as subservient and docile. Sexualized cross-cultural representations have determining effects on the way many people think about Others, simplifying differences, reducing the Other to categories of archetypes and often engaging in divisive discourse/practice.

Although for expatriates, finding and securing a local spouse may also serve as a strategic form of adaptation, because his/her social/cultural capital is likely to lighten the burden of adaptation imperatives. The expat will still face considerable adaptive challenge, but having a host-country spouse will resolve much of the hurdles caused by unfamiliarity with local norms and modes of practice, lack of fluency in the local

language, etc., while providing leverage and multiple forms of support. Expatriates who are married or in a committed relationship with a Vietnamese national are in a strategic social position: as foreigners they relate to other outsiders, notably through the thick connections that bind the local expatriate community and sub-communities; and by virtue of their membership into a Vietnamese family, they benefit from additional support in navigating the receiving society – thanks in part to the cultural and social capital of the family in-law.

Despite the practical implications of exogamy on adaptation, but considering dominant gender and sexual scripts/expectations in the configuration of cross-cultural relations, exogamy between expatriates and host-country nationals seems to be structured by enduring and deeply engrained ideas about what constitutes femininity and masculinity, not only in terms of 'role-play' and performance, but also in terms of embodiment. Shine (2010) concedes that: "in general, Asian women are more appealing to Western men than Asian men are to Western women. I know I'm in the minority here (and if this calls my heterosexuality into doubt, I can live with that)." (Shine, 2010) Here, Shine alludes to the idea that 'typical' Asian male characteristics may not be in line with constructed Western standards of masculinity. Her attraction to Asian men therefore, may be conceived as unusual, considering the physical attributes that are often associated with virility and manliness in the West.

Shine brings up an interesting point, which is corroborated by Angie's testimony. In an interview, Angie explained her position:

> Angie [Australian woman, late twenties]: I came here with my boyfriend. Things didn't workout between us. He went with a Vietnamese girl after

> me. It was easy for him, Vietnamese girls really liked him because he is not a Neanderthal with retrograde ideas about women, plus he loves Vietnamese culture and wants to stay in Vietnam. But for me, […] I will move on eventually [… and] I am not so attracted to Vietnamese [men]… actually Southeast Asian men in general. No offense, this is not about personality… I don't know, … [pause] it's a body type thing I think […]. I've had an opportunity with a really nice, professional, educated, charming, Vietnamese man, with modern ideas, … [pause] but no real desire. I just didn't feel any attraction.

Angie felt that she needed to explain herself: she perceived her own bias, but did not consider this as racism. Rather it was a sexualized perception of the Other that was so deeply engrained that it inhibited cross-ethnic attraction. As such, this dimension of Angie's habitus was determining her sexual preference and serving as barrier to a potential relationship with an otherwise suitable partner. Angie explained that this Vietnamese man was a prominent doctor and that it wasn't his financial situation that acted as deterrent. She conceded that he would have been a good provider, a kind partner, and having received his education in the West, he would have appreciated her need/desire to have a career of her own. Accordingly, Angie expressed a purely physical inhibition.

It is true generally that Vietnamese men (with few exceptions) are less hairy,[160] have smaller frames and more refined or seemingly delicate features compared to Western men. Observable differences are linked to deeply internalized constructs about what might constitute masculinity and masculine appeal from the point of view of Western sensibilities. By contrast, many Western women may seem 'larger' in size, as well as potentially over-assertive, over-ambitious, aggressive and bold, compared to

[160] "It is interesting to note that during the Vietnam War, [Vietnamese] men envied the American soldiers. Vietnamese men have little or no body hair, but hairiness is regarded as a strong symbol of masculinity. It seems to have put men into a state of constant humiliation to watch hairy GIs being admired by Vietnamese women." (Pastoetter, 2000)

Vietnamese women. Again, this is linked to deeply internalized constructs about femininity and on the criteria of feminine desirability. Racial/ethnic differentiation clearly overlaps with gender and sexual dynamics, and it seems that deeply engrained constructs about sexualized Others continue to pervade perceptions. More importantly, it is the internalization of such criteria that substantiate the configuration of dispositions. The habitus is therefore front and center in the negotiation of sexualized cross-cultural encounters, while relative gendered positionality in Vietnam seem to advantage men.

> I am one of those few white women married to a Vietnamese man. We celebrate our 20th wedding anniversary next week. I have lived in Vietnam now for half of my life, and inside a Vietnamese family, so I have observed that as a generalization "little Buddha" [Little King] syndrome is firmly in place. [Denoting the phallocentric nature of Vietnamese culture and the normalized adulation of boys] There are many reasons why relationships [between a Vietnamese man and a Western woman] are hard to begin, including: 1. Size matters. Foreign women are just generally bigger than local women. In addition, although they will not admit it but most men here are afraid they're not going to "size up" in the performance stakes. 2. Family. Fitting in language wise & culturally is hard. Your man may be new age but his parent and grandparents most likely are not. 3. Money. A Viet girl bringing home a foreign guy is usually bringing home a money source. Even if you are wealthy, unless your man earns more than you, this just threatens his manhood. (Nguyen, 2011)

Although things are changing, prevalent sexual dynamics between men and women (expats and Vietnamese nationals alike) are still based on the construction of old models of femininity and masculinity; and traditions seem slow in changing. Western women may well assume, based on internalized prejudices that a relationship with a Vietnamese man would entails having to (re)enact conventional gender roles, and having to meet what can be perceived as 'backward' gendered expectations of subservience, domesticity, docility, humility and obedience, in order to please a Vietnamese man, his parents, and/or

his community. In contrast, the construction of a modern 'liberated' Western feminine habitus might instead rely on other intersubjective criteria for what constitutes a "desirable relationship" with a man, notably ideas revolving around the possibility of mutual devotion on an equal footing, a relatively flexible gendered division of labor, and different sets of pretenses about money, power and status within the couple/family unit. Cross-cultural differences (perceived and reproduced) may incur 'dissonance' or 'non-correspondence' between the gendered worldviews of some Western women and most Vietnamese men[161], which is then rendered manifest through the prevalence of practices, which reproduce limiting constructs about Others.

Ultimately, Western expatriate women seem to be at a disadvantage, because while they are generally more interested in expatriate men; expatriate men for their part are more likely to take advantage of a huge pool of available women composed of both expatriates and Vietnamese nationals. Jessica's survey testimony confirms that: "it's incredibly hard being a single woman in Vietnam. Most of the [men, in the] potential dating pool are attracted to Vietnamese women. So there is about a 0% chance of finding a man or being in a relationship." Jessica's subjective point of view relates to the experience of being 'excluded' from the pool of women that men are likely to choose from. She expresses frustration and a sense of defeat with regards to the possibility of finding a partner while in Vietnam. Alternatively, for bisexual women, the situation seems just as bleak. For Debbie, another survey respondent, "the dating scene is ridiculous... all the expat men admit pretty openly they 'don't date white women' (they're

[161] See Pastoetter (2000) for examples of prevalent sexual constructs/dynamics in Vietnamese society.

here for the Asians!) and the lesbians are all hiding underground or something." Single expatriate women, heterosexual, lesbians and bisexuals, thus seem to be experiencing serious hurdles related to the establishment of suitable intimate partnerships in Vietnam.

Participant observation sessions in bars/nightclubs and on the street revealed that many expat men choose to actively court local women, and that Vietnamese women seem to respond positively to their advances. In nightclub settings, many Vietnamese women 'perform' a hyper sexualized femininity, wearing very short skirts and very high heels, to fit caricatured and objectifying feminine imagery. Based on that imagery, I observed expats men nonchalantly rate women's projected sexual appeal on a scale of 1 to ten. Concomitantly, answers to open-ended questions in the survey revealed that single expat women in particular find it difficult to "meet men that are not smitten with local butterflies." Underlying cross-cultural tensions then surface, notably as the dating scene becomes a competitive ground where expat men constitute a limited pool of potentially desirable suitors. Respondents' narratives drawn from survey open-ended questions and interviews paint a clearer picture, revealing why certain aspect of sexual identities and practices incur located challenges.

To tackle and gain greater depth of understanding into this issue, I organized a focus group session on the theme of the dating scene, with respondents chosen based on their distinct backgrounds and specific social positions –to produce contrast and highlight diversity, with gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity as layered factors of distinction. Respondents expressed their perceptions and shared their experiences in a conversational context, which allowed each participant to negotiate their social position within the

dynamic of the discussion group, producing a comparative discourse. The subjective points of view of participants revealed that they are largely caught-up in their own 'located apprehension' and that their experiences are bound-up in the negotiation of their sexual needs, desires and preferences.

In the focus group, there was Natasha, an outspoken single white heterosexual woman from Europe who had experienced repeated rejection from expatriate men as well as serious disappointments. Being in her mid-thirties, she felt pressure to secure a viable long-term relationship in order to settle down and hopefully form a family.

> Natasha [white European heterosexual, mid-thirties]: ... I'm totally loosing hope. The single [expat] guys I meet are afraid of commitment because they want to get in bed with Asian [girls]... sure an open relationship, friends with benefit, they can handle, but nothing viable for the long term. […] There are available single [expat] guys out there, but they're hard to find and they get 'snatched up' in no time! [laugh] Aaah, no pun intended! [Everyone laughs]

Natasha's frustration stemmed from meeting interesting expatriates who were not ready to commit to a monogamous relationship with her. She had expectations and aspirations that were 'crushed' by her lovers and as a result, she found herself alone, "heartbroken and disillusioned!" and relying on her strong network of expat girlfriends for support. She perceived her age as well as her origins (white European) to be disadvantages, and felt as if she was "competing for attention" from expat men, against "younger, petite Vietnamese girls". In general, Vietnamese mores require the woman to be (often significantly) younger than the man; as such, Vietnamese women are generally interested in relatively older men. In turn, older expatriate women may feel they are at a direct disadvantage if they are looking for an expat partner of their age cohort.

> Many Vietnamese consider that at 30 a woman is well past marrying age, and her life therefore has little meaning. She's unlikely to find an unattached older man, and younger men aren't looking in her direction. [… Par.] It can be liberating for a Western woman to be freed from the constraints of sexual objectification, but being regarded as a romantic non-entity at 30-something – an experience I have not encountered elsewhere – was pretty galling. (Shine, 2010)

Although generally well adapted to the Vietnamese receiving context, Natasha was facing her greatest challenge as an extension of dominant sexual dynamics and an internalized sense of Western entitlement, which coincided with a construction of Vietnamese women as 'competition'. Being single and experiencing 'dead-end' sexual encounters, Natasha internalized her rejection as a symptom of an underlying contest that was being played out between her and Vietnamese women, in order to secure the attention and commitment of an expat man.

For Natasha the main issue was the perception of "slim pickings" (as she said) in reference to the pool of single expatriate men –those specifically interested in expatriate women and willing to forge a long-term relationship. Natasha explained that she sometimes would give-in to casual sex, for fun, to alleviate loneliness or foster a momentary sense of intimacy with someone, usually with the hope that it could lead to something more. However, her frustrations and angst reflected a deep longing and disappointment: "For sure, I won't meet 'Mister Right' here…" she said with a tone of defeat.

The case of Emma, another focus group participant, can be contrasted to Natasha's situation. In fact, during the focus group session, Natasha made several comments about Emma's advantages in the dating scene, denoting an underlying

animosity and jealousy born of Natasha's perception of her relative disadvantage as a white, strongly built and tall woman of Northern European origin. Emma, a North American-born Viet Kieu in her mid-twenties, represented Natasha's competition. Emma was perceived as a threat, and Natasha pointedly channeled some of her animosity towards her in the beginning of the session. The interaction between Natasha and Emma seemed tense at first, until Natasha realized that Emma was interested in forging a relationship with a Vietnamese man.

Emma decided to come to Vietnam to bond with her extended family and hopefully settle here permanently. She was surrounded by caring family members keen to contribute to her adaptation and social integration. And unlike many other single expatriate women, she felt that she received a lot of male attention, probably due in part to her age, ethnicity and appearance. Being ethnic Vietnamese and speaking both English and Vietnamese fluently, she admitted that both expatriate and Vietnamese men often flirted with her. Though her main dilemma was trying to overcome her (cross-)cultural expectations in order to give Vietnamese men a chance.

> Emma [Viet Kieu heterosexual, mid-twenties]: I have to say that I get a fair bit of attention [from men] when I go out [… but] my main problem is that my grandparents are determined to fix me up with a local boy! I'm freakin out! [...] Don't get me wrong, I don't mind getting 'set up' with a Vietnamese man, but I'd like him to be modern. A-ha better yet, I'd like to 'like him' [...] I went out on dates with a couple of Vietnamese guys recently [Pause – Laugh] it was tragic [...and] sort of my fault though. [...]

Emma explained subsequently that she actively sought to find someone who would share her taste in music, television shows, movies, and food, and for the most part she felt there was little to no overlap. According to her, the young men she had been introduced to,

were “too Vietnamese” with a narrow exposure to Western and international cultures. She expressed impatience towards this lack of cultural convergence in her romantic encounters. The problem Emma faced was associated to the pressure of her family in finding ‘a Vietnamese husband’ that according to her, lacked familiarity with the cultural frame of reference she was familiar with. In turn, she became convinced that if she were to ever settle down with a Vietnamese man, the ideal would be for him to have studied or lived in the West for a little while. She understood that she was of prime marrying age, and that her relatively high social status and professional education warranted careful considerations as to who might be suitable for her. Her grandmother meticulously chose young men of middle-upper class that were older than Emma, ‘better educated’, securely employed, and well connected. Although she was born in North America, Emma was embracing her Vietnamese culture and identity. Though she hadn’t anticipated that there would be such a cultural divide between her and the Vietnamese men she was being introduced to. While she wanted to give them a chance, she perceived above all the ‘gap’ between her dispositions and those of her suitors, between her cultural frame of reference and theirs. Problems related to skewed cross-cultural representations and expectations seem to be common as Western habituses encounter Others. And adaptation imperative may well revolve around the need to bracket the dispositions and doxic knowledge that reify perceived differences.

Vincent, another focus group participant, chose to secure a relationship with an expatriate woman with the same nationality as his. This curbed the risk of incurring cross-cultural dissonance. Vincent was in his late twenties, experiencing ‘expat life’ for

the first time, and relying on his expat girlfriend as a main source of support. While Vincent had been in Vietnam only 8 months when they started dating, she had been in Vietnam for a number of years. She introduced him to many people, helped him find key resources, taught him how to drive a motorbike, and spurred him on to learn Vietnamese. Together they shared common experiences related to living and working in Vietnam as foreigners, while relying on the same cultural frame of reference, which set the terms of their intimacy. In turn, given her experience within, and knowledge of, the receiving society, she also seems to have markedly contributed to his adaptation.

> Vincent [White Australian, late twenties]: […] I was single for 8 months until I met the girl I am dating now. So it's not always that easy [… to find a compatible partner]! [...] Both of us would like it to go on but her project in Vietnam is almost done and she's getting posted [… overseas] in 3 months time. I am here for at least a couple more years. It sucks that it's just the wrong timing! […]

At the time of the focus group, they had been dating for close to a year, so Vincent had grown attached to his girlfriend. For Vincent, it was 'transnational mobility and its discontent' that served as a source of anxiety, as he confessed he had "fallen in love" with her. Even the idea of love seemed to be culturally imbued, as he described how they "have so much in common" and "share the same values." A form of cultural congruence seemed to be what he felt emerged so easily with her. Though his situation, like those of the other respondents in the focus group, underscored the complexities and contradictions of attachment and transience: the difficulties inherent in forging a lasting bond, and ostensibly a sense of intimate conjunction with a "like-minded person" (however that might be conceived by each agent), under the circumstances of global hyper mobility. Vincent coined it as "bad timing" as he was "being left behind" and this, undoubtedly,

seemed like an emotionally taxing experience. Vincent feared isolation and the prospective loss of his girlfriend generated nervous energy and confusion, notably as she had been a comforting source of security in an otherwise foreign environment.

It was unclear how Vincent and his girlfriend were going to manage their forthcoming separation, whether they would end the relationship, or whether they would try to maintain a long distance liaison. Difficulties of this sort denote certain risks in 'becoming attached' to another expatriate along the way. This may also explain why expatriate men find exogamy with Vietnamese women appealing, insofar as local women provide a 'stable partnership option' while they are settled in Vietnam[162], so they are less likely to be left behind, by ambitious and professionally-minded expatriate women, or be asked to 'drop everything to follow her', a situation that would be untenable for most professional expatriate men.

Another interesting case, is that of Alice, a white middle-aged woman who self-identified as a lesbian. Like Natasha, Alice expressed her disillusionment and sense of defeat, though her struggle was centered on her desire/need to meet other like-minded lesbians, and possibly a partner.

> Alice [white North American lesbian, middle-age]: […] I don't even know where to start. [Pause – Sigh] I've been here one year, and I'm here for a four-year assignment. I'm single. I am not interested in men or the meat market club scene. [...] There is no way in hell I can be 'out' [... and] frankly I have yet to meet another lesbian. [...] I don't know but it seems my situation is pretty bleak. [...]

[162] Once engaged in a 'committed' relationship with a foreigner, many Vietnamese women might give-in to pressures to have premarital sex; and in turn, they will be unlikely to leave their partner because 'traditional thinking' would have them believe that they are working their way towards marriage. In turn, most Vietnamese women who make the choice of being with a foreigner' would be ready, as per their internalized ideas about a 'wife's loyalty to her husband', to follow him on future assignment overseas.

Alice admitted to suffering from loneliness and wishing to end her years of celibacy, though she couldn't imagine coming out in Vietnam, notably due to her occupational status as a diplomatic representative, which demanded discretion about her private life. Alice perceived her situation as desperate, and while she was well-adapted to the Vietnamese receiving contexts, thanks in part to years of successive expatriation to different countries, her level of satisfaction was dampened by her inability to share her life with a significant other. Her occupational status afforded a great quality of life, with all the practical support she could need (driver, maid, personal assistant/secretary, etc.), therefore she did not experience any practical challenge related to her adaptation to the receiving context. Rather, her main concern was a lingering lonesomeness, which she attributed to the fact that she couldn't 'come out' and had not met other lesbians, thereby perceiving the improbability of her wish to find a potential partner.

Indeed, it seems that hurdles in the search for a suitable partner can exacerbate frustrations and intensify feelings of loneliness regardless of sexual orientation. For expatriate women in Vietnam especially, this seems to be a common snag. Comments such as the following, certainly exemplify how expatriates' subjective experiences of loneliness are articulated in relation to both: exclusion within the host society and a lack of durable and meaningful 'intimate companionship'.

> Even though people were very kind and my teaching community was beyond wonderful, there was isolation and loneliness of being different and not part of their society. [Survey respondent]

> It's lonely, being single in a city of fewer dating opportunities and being older than many single expats [Survey respondent]

> Wendy [Interview respondent -single Caucasian heterosexual female, mid 30s]: I think I'm more homesick since I'm single. When I was with […my boyfriend] it was easier it seems. I miss the companionship even though I have awesome friends here, I just feel alone when I get home […and] I've been compensating with Skype. [Pause] Thank god for Skype. […]
> Interviewer: Are you actively looking for a boyfriend here?
> Wendy: I was for a while, but I am so fed up of dating guys that don't want things to get serious. I end up getting my hopes up and then I crash and burn.
> Interviewer: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. [Pause] Do you …
> Wendy: … With the last guy I dated, it was like getting mixed messages, when we traveled together or when he came to see me at my place, it was like we were a couple, but when we met in public at a café or a bar, he acted distant and flirted with so many women in my face. It made me so sad and jealous. And I let him talk me into this charade for some time because I felt alone and craved his company. I was the secret mistress, when he had no one better in the picture. […] It's better to be lonely and getting on with it, then be lonely and heartbroken, so now I'm not looking anymore…

Drawing on the open-ended questions in the survey, it seems that 'solitude' is a recurring theme amongst expats. In NVIVO, terms such as "lonely," "loneliness" "alone," "isolated," "solitude," "lonesome," and "homesick" were identified as coding references and linked to a node about "Feelings: Solitude-Homesickness." On 252 testimonies, 16 respondents (6.3%) cited the above feelings as one of the challenges they experienced. What is interesting though, is that 15 of these comments were emitted by female respondents, 13 of whom reported being single. Therefore single expatriate women may be more prone to perceiving and experiencing feelings of loneliness and isolation compared to men, in part because of disparate access to potential partnerships opportunities, and potentially as an extension of gendered dispositions surrounding the need for intimate companionship.

Alice, having not met other lesbians since her arrival, was convinced that she would probably be single for the remainder of her mandate in Vietnam. Although she was not socially isolated, she still perceived herself to be 'alone'. During the focus group session she explained that she did not know where to go to meet a potential girlfriend. She felt that women's groups and networks were so 'heterosexual' that these were hardly the place to risk making advances and that coming out would be out of the question. Alice's social position is characterized by her sexual orientation in two adjacent heteronormative contexts: the Vietnamese cultural context and the expatriate community in Vietnam. Alice explains: "At home, I'm out! Everyone in my family, my friends, all know I'm a lesbian. Here, I have to pretend that I am something else. […] When I say that I am single, never been married and don't have kids, even expats react like it's shocking. [… I'm] so frustrated […to be] lonely, not just because I don't have a partner, but really because I don't have a community that I can relate to […and] nowhere to go to be with women like me [who share my sexual orientation]." Alice explained that she made a few good friends since she moved to Vietnam, but most are heterosexuals with boyfriends/husbands (some with kids). So their priorities are elsewhere. Meanwhile her single heterosexual friends would rather go to 'mainstream expat events' in the hope of meeting someone. So she is dragged around in heterosexual social settings where she doesn't feel "in her element." Alice is undoubtedly in a difficult social position and she experiences isolation despite having a fairly extensive network of acquaintances and friends.

Clearly most sexual encounters involving expatriates are framed by pervasive heteronormative assumptions. Although representing a minority of expatriates, gay/lesbian respondents identified challenges that were directly related to their sexual orientation. Ben, a survey respondent, stated for example that, at a "Personal [level]- [it's a] small gay scene so finding [a] partner = slim opportunity." Unlike Alice who simply could not locate a community of lesbians, Ben did find a small gay community, though according to him, it was still difficult to find a partner. Similarly, as a response to the question 'What are the main challenges you experience in your personal/family life and through your work in Vietnam?' David, a survey respondent, simply wrote: "Being gay!" Of course, this begs the question: 'why'?

Homosexuality is not illegal in Vietnam, though the predominance of heteronormative expectations tends to push homosexuality underground. Socially, homosexuality is tolerated but strictly as a matter of private life, so being out may be out of the question. Heteronormative patriarchal traditions in Vietnam are still immensely influential, despite the newfound visibility of the local LGBT community and the increasingly positive public feedback on same-sex marriage, especially according to the younger generations.[163]

[163] In a recent article published on the online edition of *The Atlantic*, Maresca (2013) notes the sudden political support for LGBT rights and same-sex marriages, despite Vietnam's human rights violations in a number of other fields. The increased visibility of LGBT rights issues is a sudden turn-around from the usual repression tactics of police forces, who in the past, regularly intervened to 'bust' informal gay/lesbian wedding parties. "Just as surprising is the speed at which the gay rights movement in Vietnam has developed. Marginalized only a few years ago, the LGBT community is not only finding support in the legal sphere but has been winning broad acceptance in the media and in public life. From Vietnam's first gay parade last August [2012] in Hanoi to an openly transgender contestant on last season's *Vietnam Idol* (an *American Idol* franchise), it's as if the closet door has exploded off its hinges. International attention grew in February of this year when Vietnamese photographer Maika Elan won a World Press Photo Award for her series The Pink Choice, documenting the lives of Vietnamese gay couples." (Maresca, 2013)

> Over the last 10 years Vietnam has become more free and life has become much easier for gays and lesbians though. In 2002 the government media declared homosexuality a social evil and there was a short-lived campaign against gays and lesbians. Notwithstanding this there has been a burgeoning gay scene developing in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) and to a lesser extent a smaller scene in Hanoi. In both cities various bars and clubs have opened catering to gays. (Gay Times, [No date])

Still however, homosexuality may be conceived as a threat to tradition and morality, a form of family dishonor, and a form of deviance, which must be hidden from view.[164] Although things are changing especially for the younger generation,[165] there is still great pressure to abide by family expectations. By extension, gay/lesbian Western expatriates who are used to living in a more tolerant and open society find it difficult to adapt in such an environment. Another focus group participant, Luther, explained that he did not feel comfortable 'coming out' in Hanoi:

> Luther (Australian, middle-aged white man): […] Vietnamese friends and acquaintances [who] didn't know I am gay, [...] started 'setting me up' with women. It was so awkward to turn them down. This went on for years [...] until I finally met someone. […] We told only our close friends.

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[164] "Proschan (1998) observed that traditional Vietnamese society was strongly shaped by Neo-Confucian conceptions and practices of ancestral veneration and filial responsibility (hieu): A man's most important duty is to reproduce a male child to carry on the ancestral line: "The Annamite loathes dying without being assured of male dependants. One can say that there exists a veritable obligation, of the religious or at least mystical order, to give birth as early as possible to the cult's heir" (Khèrian, 1937:29). Ethnologist Nguyen Van Huyen noted in 1939 that "male celibacy is always in complete disfavor. It continues to be considered as an act of filial impiety," with bachelors prohibited from participating in certain family and village rituals (Nguyen Van Huyen, 1944/1939: 41). The tenacity of this traditional stricture is evident from [the 1989] census data: of Vietnamese males over the age of 40, barely 1 percent has never married (Vietnam Population Census, 1989)." (Pastoetter, 2000)

[165] Upon researching the subject of homosexuality in Vietnam, an anonymous returning Viet Kieu found that, with regards to homosexuality, many Vietnamese are "narrow-minded" and that it was in the best interest of gays and lesbians to stay closeted. [Par. …] Homosexuality seems to be one of those topics that Vietnamese people just don't want to talk about. It's there, but never acknowledge[d]. [… Par. … Despite this, there has been a] progression of the view of Vietnamese people towards homosexuality. […] In 2001, 82% of the people surveyed said that homosexuality was never acceptable. In 2007, 80% of adolescents surveyed said "no" when asked if homosexuality was a bad thing." (Anonymous –Talk One Vietnam, 2010)

For Luther, 'living in the closet' was an imperative at first. However, 'living in the closet' meant having to 'perform' heterosexuality by disguising his true sexual orientation. Heterosexuality being the 'default sexual orientation' in Vietnam, would almost inevitably lead Vietnamese nationals to assume Luther was, or should be, interested in women. His resistance to engaging in 'heterosexual encounters' despite the social pressure entailed a malaise, which he endured for an extended period of time, until he found a partner –a reason to 'come out' to a close circle of friends. Luther's experience denotes the perception of social pressures to negotiate his social position and sexual preferences 'around' local scripts in order to avoid public stigma. As a testament to such pressures, I was told by another long-term expatriate, through an informal conversation (which I documented in my observant participation records) that "many gay Vietnamese men choose to marry and have kids anyway and end up living a double life [...]" indulging in secret sexual escapades with same-sex lovers, while upholding traditional heteronormative values. In turn, gay/lesbian expatriates (as well as bisexuals with same-sex partners) are likely to face challenges that are distinct from those of heterosexual expatriates. Notably, 'living in the closet' due to a lack of social awareness and tolerance may entail the public suppression of an important aspect of one's sexual identity.[166]

The reality for gay and lesbian expatriates is therefore shaped by Vietnam's heteronormative structure and the taboo nature of homosexuality, which together push

[166] Although Vietnamese men and women sometimes walk hand-in-hand or arm-in-arm in public, this practice is associated to deep kinship/friendship bonds. In fact, public displays of affection are rather frowned upon and publicly visible homosexuality is likely to be harshly criticized. The few public gay weddings that took place in the late 90s, received unsympathetic responses by state controlled media as well as government administrators. Although more recent cases of have not been formally condemned, they have no legal standing.

homosexuality underground.[167] Although some gay expatriates (along with tourists) are partaking in the emergence of a male-centered hyper-sexualized gay club scene, associated to the urban nightlife, especially in Ho Chi Minh City.[168] Lesbians remain less visible and there are no conspicuous outlets for more mature gays/lesbians that may not be interested in the nightclub scene. During the focus group session, Alice cynically stated:

> Alice: I am not about to dress up in skimpy clothes to make an appearance in a local gay club. Those places just aren't where I could meet a suitable partner. I am not looking for 'boom boom' [a local expression for sex]. […]

Here, Alice's perception of the gay club scene speaks to pervasive stereotypes about the hyper-sexualization of gay spaces, denoting her unease about the option of socializing in such places, and her conviction that even there, she would not fit in.

In contrast to the paucity of research on the experiences of lesbian expatriates, there is an emerging scholarship on transnational queer experience in Asia, though nothing that systematically addresses the experiences of LGBT expats in Vietnam.

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[167] Current conditions related to the lack of sexual education, the weight of traditions, and engrained prejudice about homosexuality, contribute to pervasive stigma related to the current spread of HIV/AIDS in Vietnam. "As publications like The Men of Viet Nam: A Travel Guide to Gay Viet Nam and Web sites like www.utopia-asia.com suggest, foreign homosexual sex tourism is on the rise. Many Western visitors, who are called "Rice Queens," [are believed to] leave behind everything they know about safe sex practices when they come to Vietnam [… and] the Nguyen Friendship Society [estimates that] one third of Vietnamese men who have sex with foreigners do not use a condom, and may have never used a condom before." (Pastoetter, 2000) Of course, the spread of HIV/AIDS is a catalyst for concerns revolving around safe sex and sexual education in Vietnamese society more generally; though it is often associated with homosexual rather than heterosexual promiscuity, with other overlapping 'social evils' such as drug use and sex work. One recent study, by Bao Ngoc Vu et al. (2012) epitomizes such biased concerns, focusing exclusively on the intersection of homosexual practices (men who have sex with men), sex work (men who sell sex to men) and drug use (male drug users who exchange sex for drugs), as major correlates to the spread of HIV/AIDS in Vietnam. (Bao Ngoc Vu et al., 2012)

[168] It is clear that Ho Chi Minh City seems more 'open' to homosexuality compared to Hanoi, which is due in part to the proliferation of gay bars and a higher degree of tolerance from local police forces in the Southern metropolis. (MacDonald, 2002)

Collins (2009) reveals that gay-identified expatriates experience 'life overseas' through their

> deeply held beliefs about gay identity and sexual practice and about what host destinations should deliver (Alexander, 1998; Puar, 2001, 2002) […] The lived experiences of transnational mobility for gay expatriates show that their mobility is a process of self-actualization and one that unsettles "gay" experience. Expatriates articulate gay mobility as escape from the regulations of home while drawing from homonormative beliefs and practices to take part in transnational "gay" spaces. [… The term] homonormativity [… is used to highlight the way] expatriates deploy normalizing discourses of gender, sexuality, race–nation, class, and consumerism to validate their self-actualizing experiences abroad—they seek inclusion in travel discourses, which promise individualized selfdiscovery [sic] and the reification of the "West and the rest" (Hall 1992). Thus, homonormative mobility highlights the individualized consumerism in "freeing" travel, the normalized masculinities of sexual adventure, the racialization of "host" men, and the naturalization of Western gay identity abroad. Yet homonormative mobility does not constitute a homogenizing force, shaping gender, sexuality, or host communities into a stable imprint of the "Western gay"; rather, […] homonormative mobility troubles what it is to be "gay" abroad. (Collins, 2009: 466-467)

Considering that many Western societies are making significant headway in terms of the legal and socio-cultural acceptance of homosexuality, it seems that LGBTs are increasingly 'accepted' within Western institutions, notably those that are questioning their heteronormative structure and related policy frameworks. According to Duggan (2002) this represents a radical breakthrough in sexual politics in the West, denoting growing tolerance rather than resistance toward sexual difference, and the emergence of new standards in the cultural politics of inclusion. While some institutions worldwide are demonstrating greater levels of acceptance than ever before, homophobic violence is still rampant and LGBTs are still systematically persecuted and marginalized, sometimes at

the hands of state authorities, although in Vietnam, this is changing and the local LGBT community has recently been much more visible than in the past.

Despite the fact that Vietnamese society is extremely conservative (in terms of heteronormativity), unprecedented developments are now taking place in Vietnam, notably with the second gay pride parade, which took place in Hanoi on August 4th 2013. On this occasion 200 activists gathered to raise awareness and advocate for equal rights.

> Participants said they hoped to reduce prejudice and discrimination against the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community in Vietnam, where Confucian social mores — with their emphasis on tradition and family — still dominate. […] Homosexuality remains largely taboo in Vietnam, with gay people routinely portrayed in the media as comical figures or as suffering from a condition that can be treated. […] The law on marriage and family is due to be debated at the National Assembly later this year and any move to legalise [sic] gay unions would make Vietnam the first country in Asia to do so. [… However,] e]xperts have highlighted the fact that […] gay rights […] do not threaten the communist party's control [so this focus whitewashes] its otherwise poor rights record. (Agence France-Presse, 2013)

It is important therefore to remain critical of differences between host country cultures, as Vietnamese society has traditionally been 'less open' to homosexuality, than neighboring Thailand and the Philippines for example. Perhaps the recent mobilization of the LGBT community in Vietnam is a sign of things to come; although traditions and values related to gender and sexual scripts, which are deeply rooted in habitus are likely to remain pervasive dimensions of the Vietnamese collective consciousness.

5.3-. Conclusions

The interview and focus group narratives supported by survey results, demonstrate how gender, sexuality and marital/relationship status influence the subjective

experiences of expatriates. Expatriate experiences cannot be reduced to a set typology of circumstances or a specific model of gendered and sexual practice. Needs, exchanges and negotiations are always distinctly located, and produced by the interaction between relative positionality and dispositions. Gender, sexual preferences, sexual orientation and marital/relationship status were conceptualized as key factors of distinction, which modulate encounters/exchanges amongst expats and between expats and Vietnamese nationals. In turn, these factors of distinction, with the compounding effects of others (age, class, ethnicity/race, origin, occupation, etc.) seem to elucidate key sets of sexual practices, and how these might be translated into adaptive strategies. It is with this in mind that narrative analysis paid attention to the subjective perceptions and apprehension of expatriates, their underlying assumptions and the doxic knowledge that substantiate constructs on Others. I showed that in the dating scene, positionality and habitus are thoroughly engaged, notably in producing cross-clutural dissonance and/or in reproducing models of representation. Finally, these factors of distinction and their particular intersections also help unravel the link between the articulation of highly personalized and located experiences, and the distinctive cognitive, emotional and perceptive propensities of respondents. Here, more clearly, we begin to draw a parallel between positionality and habitus, and knowledge and agency. As part of habitus, deeply engrained constructs/assumptions act as knowledge, or forms of apprehension that correspond to the ways in which (inter)subjective realities are known and experienced. It is this knowledge in relation to (inter)personal circumstances that reify the articulation of located emotions and motivations, which in turn influences practices, actions, choices,

decisions, etc., including forms of (re-)enactments. Sexual encounters and sexual practices are rooted in the articulation of the self, and in the visceral motivations of expatriates as they adapt to their life overseas. Based on expatriate testimonies, and despite the potential reproduction of (neo)colonial patterns of relations (involving gender, class and race), sexual orientation, marital/relationship status and related sexual dispositions influence crucial aspects of expatriates' personal lives, notably by facilitating cross-cultural adaptation, or by enhancing or hindering life satisfaction overseas.

In every case covered, the importance of subjective experiences is highlighted, notably expatriates' reliance and formulation of 'located perceptions', including distinct sets of feelings, assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes about Others, and about the sexual dynamics they observe/experience, and which they describe mainly in terms of their direct or indirect effects on their personal life. By linking markers of differentiation to an analysis of subjective experience, we work to reveal how expatriate adaptation is modulated by relative positionality and habitus. I also argued that expatriate subjectivities are sometimes informed by neo-colonial dispositions, founded on orientalist assumptions that reproduce cross-cultural dynamics. These dynamics reify the role of gender, race and class in the configuration of sexualized cross-cultural encounters/relations. While sexual encounters have historically served as a key interface for cross-cultural exchanges between expatriates and host country nationals, inequalities and the conditions that enhance the status of expatriate men in Vietnam speak to enduring structural forces rooted in the terms of Western conquest and transnational machismo, as well as traditional/conventional forms of Vietnamese patriarchy. Expatriate practices and their

underlying assumptions and desires may contribute to the conceptual representation of Asia and therefore Vietnam, as a sexual playground for privileged (white) men.

It seems that sexual/spousal relations play a distinct role in facilitating some aspects of adaptation, while also imparting peripheral challenges. Cross-cultural exogamy between expatriates and host country nationals may be fraught with cross-cultural dissonance and related challenges, although a Vietnamese spouse is likely to alleviate key hurdles in the negotiation of local cultural/structural intricacies and help with language acquisition, etc. Similarly, endogamy involving highly mobile expatriates was also linked to distinct pros and cons. Whereas expatriate spouses (or sexual partners) may share common experiences as foreigners (born of their relatively similar social position as expats), relate to each other on the basis of a similar cultural frame of reference, and engage in mutual transfers of locally-relevant forms of cultural and social capital; though they may also have to conciliate/manage mutual attachments and individual transience. Despite such peripheral challenges, it seems that intimate companionship in general may be pivotal in thwarting loneliness and isolation, as these may be experienced as serious impediments to life satisfaction overseas. Based on the testimonies of respondents, it appears that single expatriate women (regardless of their sexual orientation) may be more susceptible to feelings of loneliness and isolation, due in part to predominant sexual dynamics, which seems to create an uneven playing field in the dating scene.

Predominant sexual dynamics, such as the propensity of some expatriate men to consider only exogamy with Vietnamese nationals as a desirable option (although many expatriate men also engage endogamy with other expatriates), combined with expatriate

women's preference for expatriate men (considering the internalized constructs that inhibit unions between expatriate women and Vietnamese men), produce distinct challenges for single heterosexual expatriate women, resulting in a narrowing of the selection pool from which viable partners can be found, and increased competition amongst the women (expatriate and Vietnamese) who are looking for expatriate male partners. In extreme cases, expatriate women's subjectivities may be influenced by experiences of rejection and disappointment, which may provoke bitterness and competitive sentiments, spurred perhaps by underlying feelings of Western entitlement and jealousy vis-à-vis an imagined oriental femininity, which is believed to be embodied by Asian women generally and Vietnamese women more specifically.

Adjacently, the heteronormative foundations of Vietnamese culture and the rather conservative orientation of this host society, seems to have a direct effect on the experience of gay/lesbian expatriates, as well as bisexuals with same-sex partners. Respondents' subjective perceptions underscored their marginal social position, and the need to hide their sexual orientation from public view, while negotiating pressures imposed by others to get 'fixed up' with someone of the opposite sex. Sexual marginality may also contribute to feelings of isolation, whereby it may be difficult for gay/lesbian expatriates to find a bias-free space, where they can meet like-minded individuals and foster a sense of community, beyond or outside of the hyper-sexualized atmosphere of gay clubs and bars.

To advance considerations on gender, sexuality, marital status, and their intersections with other factors of distinction, I propose to delve into the fields of

household and family, and to examine how class and parenting positionality and dispositional propensities influence adaptive practices. I consider class, family arrangements and parenting as key markers of differentiation, which are substantiated by a wide range of constructs and cultural ethos about the domestic sphere, civility, models of representation and categories of being. The fields of household and family are configured through specific practices of (re)productions that are rooted in the dispositional propensities of expats, enabled by class distinction and inscribed in gender, sexual, ethnic/racial expectations/scripts. Chapter 6 provides new stories about the subjective experiences of expats, and specific examples of adaptive practices surrounding the home and the manifestation of neo-colonial inclinations, cross-cultural dissonance, role performance, and deep situational anxieties.

Chapter 6

THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS

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6.1-. Survey results: Social class and expat reliance on domestic help

Factors of distinction related to gender, marital status and sexual orientation have a pivotal influence on the experience of expatriates, notably because these are markers of social position within the local culture of the receiving context, and within the expatriate community. In fact, gender, marital status and sexual orientation can be conceived as cornerstones of identity, insofar as they configure key dimensions of habitus, which in turn affect practice through the intersection of internalized roles, assumptions, preferences and sensibilities. Concomitantly, class and social status (both ascribed and internalized) also constitute decisive factors of distinction, which influence the articulation of conjectures and predilections, notably within the field of domestic relations. In this regard, the practices of expatriates can be scrutinized in relation to their household management standards and with regards to the use of domestic help. It is with this in mind that important considerations on class and status ought to be taken into account in the analysis of expatriate experiences, notably the widespread reliance on domestic help, and the power relations that may underscore this practice. With a view to the conditions that enable such pervasive inequalities to endure, expatriates and expat

families are likely to be engaged in key practices of reproduction, underscored by deeply engrained constructs that give meaning to their (inter)subjective experiences.

Adjacently, Overlapping considerations on the constitution of expatriate families ought to be addressed to better account for household dynamics. However, I propose to consider 'expatriate family arrangements' beyond conventional models, which are assumed to represent typical expatriate families. Based on survey data and testimonies, it became apparent that family situations differ and that differences in family formats incur subjective and 'highly located' experiences. In fact, while expatriate parents constitute a clearly demarcated cohort within the expatriate community, survey results highlight the range of differences in family formats, revealing that parenting practices and sensibilities may be contingent on a variety of intersecting factors, including a parent's gender, marital status, and occupation. In short, archetypes of family models simply don't represent the true diversity of expat family configurations, and subjective experiences related to parenting priorities and sensibilities ought to be taken into account in the analysis of expatriate adaptation.

Interestingly, being a parent is also a clear marker of differentiation affecting positionality and dispositional propensities, and which clearly intersects with other factors of distinction in the process of adaptation. Expatriate parents, whether they have accompanying expat children, whether they have kids that are born in the receiving context, or whether they have children (grown up adults or minors) in other countries, always find themselves in subjective and located realities. For those with dependent children, the negotiation of their roles and responsibilities as parents is likely to promote

bonds with other expat parents, while setting them apart from other expatriates who don't have children or teens at home to worry about. This social position and related child caring/rearing responsibilities inevitably require expatriates to engage in patterns of practice that reify specific construct of home, education, domesticity, civility, and related categories of being, which are relevant to the field. Inevitably, expat parents will contend with local structural and cultural conditions with their family's needs in mind, in line with their child(ren)'s needs, and according to deep-seated cultural sensibilities and concerns related to home-making. In fact, parenting works as another 'layer', another overlapping factor of distinction, which only reifies the subjective standpoint of expatriates based on gender, class, race/ethnicity, origins, national culture, marital/relationship status, age, among others. At a practical level, even the establishment of a household abroad and its maintenance, may be informed by domestic and family priorities, requiring expatriates to make decisions and specific adjustments that are meant to address key adaptation imperatives, which are often deeply rooted in habitus.

Interview and focus group narratives were crucial in uncovering how expatriate parents may perceive cross-cultural differences in parent-child or adult-child relations, considering particular Vietnamese conventions and dominant Western norms. Major findings revolve around the articulation of parental anxieties that become manifest in the expression of expatriates parents' subjective experiences, and that take on a practical dimension through patterns of practice. As such, many expatriate parents, compelled by subjective forms of differentiation and subjective motivations/sensibilities end up

transplanting and reproducing key features of Western socialization in their home-making and childrearing practices.

Finding a home and setting up a household in a foreign country entails navigating new fields of relations in order to find resources, often without fluency in the local language. Upon arrival, relative degrees of urgency may be felt, in order to find and setup a home, and expat families with dependent children may be under pressure to hurry this process along. Though for others, this process can take many months or may even be on-going considering rapid local development and other difficulties related to settling-in. In Vietnam, expatriate household arrangements vary widely, although class and remuneration level are likely to be important contingency factors that will influence living conditions: the neighborhood, the type of accommodation, the levels/modes of consumption, accessibility of household maintenance services, etc. Pertaining to class differences, considerations on occupational diversity are useful:

> Western expatriates are assumed to move as highly skilled individuals and, therefore, their relatively privileged position in these cities or their right to be there as working migrants is taken for granted. […] At the same time, power is also mediated by class, so [… the] educational and occupational diversity of expatriates […] suggests that not all Western migrants can assume an upper-class position in the global/local class hierarchies they inhabit. An increase in lesser-skilled jobs associated with urban lifestyle amenities have also become opportunities for Western migrants employed in non-managerial positions in service industries such as fitness, beauty, spas, hotels, restaurants and retail. Furthermore, there is a range of middle-income jobs such as teaching positions. (Fechter & Walsh, 2010: 1200)

Although an emergent middle class of expatriates is now flowing into developing postcolonial countries, most expatriates in these settings live in relatively privileged accommodations compared to average host country nationals, as is the case in Vietnam.

Yet, we ought to recognize that class differentiation challenges the idea that expatriates constitute a homogenous group living under similar socio-economic conditions. (Farrer, 2010; Fechter & Walsh, 2010; Leonard, 2010; Coles & Walsh, 2010)

While some expatriates benefit from institutional support, such as corporate, development or diplomatic envoys, others are on their own to find adequate accommodations. For example, many corporations and big NGOs, along side government diplomatic offices, on top of offering a generous housing allowance and covering relocation costs, also offer complete assistance packages that include support in finding and setting up a home, an education allowance for dependent children, a full medical and dental insurance package, etc. Though even when institutional support is provided, many expatriates feel "that organizations and their HR departments [… are] not doing enough to facilitate the relocation [process], especially in terms of providing support to the spouse and family [notably in the form] of support as prearrival housing arrangements […]." (Shaffer et al., 2001: 117) Farrer 2010 goes on to confirm that "[a]lthough many [expatriates] could be considered members of the 'transnational capitalist class' (Sklair 2001), not all [of them are] corporate 'expats'." (Farrer, 2010: 1214) In fact, in his study of expatriates in Shanghai, Farrer (2010) notes that "many [start] out as students, private entrepreneurs or 'local hires' [… and that those who lack institutional supports are commonly] described as 'half-pats' –a play on the term 'expat'– that refers to reduced perks such as reimbursement for international school tuition and housing allowances (Goldner, 2007)." (Idem)

Conversely, many expatriates who are 'local hires' in Vietnam, take a relative pay cut compared to what they could be earning in Western countries, yet the low cost of living associated to economic conditions in developing countries entails for expatriates, a relative boost in class status and buying power. With an expatriate wage, they are able to afford goods and services that are significantly less expensive compared to their standard costs in Western or developed countries. However, by virtue of their social position and through the practice of hiring 'domestic workers' for a relatively low wage, expatriates reproduce power dynamics that speak to historical legacies and local/global structural inequalities. As such, survey results provide an overview of key patterns of practice, which expatriates engage in, and which serve not only as indicators of their relative quality of life, but also as a backdrop to an analysis of postcolonial power dynamics and class inequalities.

While much of the literature on this subject looks at the migration and exploitation of foreign domestic workers in richer countries or cosmopolitan cities, where there is a demand for their services (Chang, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotel, 2001; Parreñas, 2001; Lutz, 2008), few studies examine how expatriates in developing countries are positioned within a system of structural inequalities that contributes to similar inter-ethnic and class divides, notably as a postcolonial manifestation of enduring disparities (Stoler, 1995, 1997a and 1997b; Fechter, 2007). Moreover, we should consider that

> analyses of gender and globalisation [sic] have […] tended to foreground disadvantaged and low skilled women, such as those working in the factories and sweatshops of developing countries. Basu *et al.* note that 'scholarship on migration and diasporas has continued this foundational work on the relationship between international capitalism and gender'

> (2001, 943) This includes work on migrants such as nurses, nannies and domestic workers […]. (Fechter, 2010: 1281)

Adjacently, there is a paucity of research on expatriates' reliance on domestic help within their receiving context and on the structural inequalities that this entails in a postcolonial context. As such, it is particularly important to realize the role of both expatriate men and women in employing the services of domestic workers in Vietnam and thus, in reproducing patterns of power relations that recall colonial arrangements. It is also important to heed the role of Vietnamese nationals in perpetuating practice and class relations that contribute to social divides.

Here, I believe my own experience as an expatriate in Vietnam is informative. I did not feel I needed a maid, and it is an upper class Vietnamese friend who insisted on sending one of her own staff to clean my place twice a week. I felt very uncomfortable and although my friend told me not to pay her, as this was part of her 'job', I always gave her money before she left. Being aware of prevalent inequalities between us, and wanting to avoid feeling like I was exploiting her, I had serious personal qualms about letting her clean my toilet –so to speak. This was symbolic of my own upbringing of course – considering I was an 'expat kid' born in Thailand and raised in the Philippines and then Canada, with live-in nannies and housekeepers, and one in particular who was like a surrogate mother for years and with who I am still in contact! As an expat in Vietnam, I was aware of my privilege and I perceived the inequalities in the relation I was "expected to have" with my housekeeper. By taking on a domestic employee, I felt I was more overtly complicit in reproducing structural and cross-cultural inequalities. (see Cook 2008) In analyzing the content of my personal diary, I realized that my disposition was

informed by my perception that cleaning behind 'richer folk', foreign or not, is somehow degrading work. I had seen well-to-do Vietnamese families employ servants, nannies, drivers and housekeepers and sometimes, treat them with contempt. So for me, it was a class issue, more than a cross-cultural or inter-racial/ethnic one. In hindsight, I realized that I was reacting to my own introjections about what I perceived as 'the social position of the Other' in relation to me. So to equalize the power dynamic, I would clean along side her. We would divide the housework between her and I, and I took time out of my busy schedule to do a share of the housework with her. We talked while doing so, and she liked to practice English with me. I was hoping this would create a win-win situation. This was my way of reflexively engaging in the negotiation of my positionality in a way that is congruent with my desire to avoid reproducing an imperial identity.

When I moved from my apartment to a new self-contained house, an expatriate friend referred me to a new housekeeper. My pattern of behavior remained the same: on each of her bi-weekly visits, we would clean the house side by side. And when I tackled 'bigger jobs', she kept on saying "No, let me do!" and it wasn't until I revisited my research notes a year later that I realized that even my efforts to equalize my rapport with her was embedded in selfish motivations and internalized feelings and constructs about my ascribed status in Vietnam: 'maybe she felt I was taking work away from her', from a purely economic stand point, was I perceived as 'cutting her pay' by 'cutting her work'? or maybe she had internalized her own social position –within the context of normative class hierarchies– to the point where it was 'inconceivable' or 'unacceptable' that I, her employer, should do it in her place. I never even thought to ask her whether she preferred

I help her, or let her do it. Would she have felt comfortable enough to tell me the truth? My reflexive process in this regard highlights my awareness of my positionality and of my dispositional propensities. And, while my practices 'in the moment' seemed to have been directed toward a desire to equalize my rapport with my maid, the ultimate result was still inscribed in habitus maintenance, and my incapacity to reach beyond some of my assumptions. In the end, it could be argued that I acted out of an indulgent habit of making myself 'feel better' about the imperial implications of my practices.

Although the problematic of 'structural inequalities' recall historical and global power dynamics, the socio-economic argument is that the 'domestic needs' of expatriates and upper-class Vietnamese create jobs, and that the domestic workers of foreigners especially have the opportunity to earn a relatively good income compared to other unskilled Vietnamese laborers in various sectors –with peripheral advantages like learning/practicing English, or receiving gifts and household things that would otherwise be thrown away or given to charity. I also gave clothing and many pairs of shoes to my housekeeper overtime. I was trying to be nice and generous, but was it mostly convenient? Was it perceived as 'help'? Did it serve as an indirect reification of my comparative class positionality?

The subjective experiences of expatriates denote that domestic workers are generally valued, though they may be treated very differently based on the attitude and dispositions of employers, notably whether the terms of the employer-employee relation remain 'strictly' instrumental, or whether it evolves into a genuine and supportive interpersonal connection. In the same time however, class and inter-ethnic hierarchies

may be so deeply internalized by housekeepers, nannies or other modern day 'servants' and their employers, including expatriates, that they may perceive 'domestic work' and incumbent power differentials, as a normative and 'tolerable' reality that extends from the objectivated structural and cultural conditions. This ties into what Bourdieu called *miscognition*, and to the normalization and internalization of attitudes and dispositions that may in some cases reproduce dynamics that resonate as forms of symbolic violence.

Illustrating a distinct form of privilege, which is linked to status and socio-economic means, survey results reveal that most expatriates in Vietnam can afford a maid or housekeeper. This can be conceived as a significant advantage and a precious timesaving strategy in many respects, allowing expatriates more leisure time and less hassle in terms of domestic chores, thereby ensuring a higher quality of life. It is also an adaptive strategy that allows them to avoid certain household management tasks that would entail difficult cross-cultural encounters, such as shopping for household goods or running errands such as paying utility bills at the bank or post office.

> It follows that ordinary people, who do not stand out at home, suddenly come to entertain a status in the host society, owing to the colour [sic] of their skin, or to their role, for which they are often not really prepared and to which they may find difficulties in getting accustomed. [Par. …] But their high status also puts at their disposal the means, economic, organizational or political, to transform their surroundings to their tastes and needs – to create their 'environmental bubbles' – and thus to reduce the tensions engendered by the strangeness of their role and status in the host society. (Cohen, 1977: 23)

Accordingly, on N=283 responses, 71% reported employing at least one domestic worker in their home. This is a relatively high proportion, denoting the normality of such practices. Respondents were also asked to specify the terms of employment of their

domestic employees; as such, on N=201 responses, 44.8% indicated having at least one full time employee at home; 48.2% indicated using the services of a regular part time employee at home; and 7% reported relying on domestic help only 'occasionally'. Accounting for those who employ their domestic help only part time and occasionally (55.2%), we might also remark the precarious nature of working conditions, considering the transience of expats, the irregular hours, the lack of regulation concerning minimum wage, and the lack of employment security for domestic workers.

Using SPSS filters to account for marital status and involvement with a Vietnamese national, an analysis of results reveals that frequencies related to the reliance on domestic staff differ between expats who are in a spousal relationship with a Vietnamese spouse and those who are married/committed to another expatriate. Data suggests that dual-expat households are more likely to use and rely on domestic help. Whereby 78.2% of dual-expat couples hire domestic help, compared to 58.1% of expatriate-Vietnamese couples/families. This variance may underscore the prevailing constructs that reify the domesticity of Vietnamese wives.[169] Though it may also point to social capital deployment, whereby a Vietnamese spouse could rely on extended family support to help out with childcare, errands and other household management needs,

[169] "The central role of women, and its intersection with race [and class], is of particular "significance [within the sphere] of the intimate and the domestic […]; for example, Clancy-Smith and Gouda in their edited volume*, Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (1998), as well as authors such as Blunt (1999) and Buettner (2004). All investigate how the realms of the domestic, the emotional and the intimate not just reflect, but are central to establishing and maintaining imperial enterprises. [Par.] Given these studies on the linkages of gender, power and imperialism in the past, one could ask how more contemporary intersections of gender, power and globalization –and specifically global capitalism– are conceptualised. [sic]." (Fechter, 2010: 1281) It is crucial to review the roles of class as a core dynamic in the use of domestic labor by expatriates in postcolonial receiving contexts, and to question how expatriate men and women, as well as Vietnamese nationals who marry expatriates contribute to these practices and in the reproduction of structural inequalities.

because family members live locally. Conversely, this also reveals that a majority of Vietnamese nationals who are in committed relationships with expatriates are likely to benefit from a lighter workload thanks to their reliance on domestic help and household staff; thus affording greater class privilege and allowing them to pursue personal, professional or entrepreneurial ambitions, which may otherwise be inaccessible to them, notably if they were married to a Vietnamese national of lower social rank.

Conversely, some 'native' men are also, like women, caught up in this dynamic, as gardeners, pool maintenance worker, guards and drivers. On N=127 responses detailing the duties of domestic employees, 7.1% indicated having access to a driver, 3.9%, and 2.4% reported using the services of guards. To be sure, many serviced apartment and gated communities, provide 24-hours security surveillance so the necessity of hiring 'private guards' is usually reserved to high-ranking government officials or corporate CEO who live in opulent villas in exclusive neighborhoods.[170] Adjacently, considering that specialized 'in-home' services can be relatively affordable, some expatriates (3.1% of N=127 responses) find it convenient to use the services of personal or professional assistants or other kinds of specialists (acupuncturist, massage therapists, manicurist, private music or language teachers, etc.) willing to make house calls.

Most expatriates would agree however that being able to afford a housekeeper or home-based employee (nanny, driver, maid, etc.) is a noteworthy privilege that is not as

[170] In 'expat-designated' neighborhood "[r]ental prices are relatively high and some landlords are getting greedy; you often will have to spend more than USD2,500 a month for a two-bedroom apartment in expatriate neighborhoods or city center and up to USD7,000 for a four/five-bedroom villa with swimming pool." (Quistrebert, 2009: 37)

accessible in their homeland.[171] Although many expatriates are grateful to their maids and other household workers for the services rendered, the power dynamic that underscore these relations recall a colonial 'bourgeois'[172] identity, denoting the privilege and expectation of 'being serviced' by an underclass of host country nationals. As Cook (2007) discusses, the imperial performance of domesticity is always laden with gender, racial, and class markers of differentiation, whereby the West is represented through Bourgeois sensibilities. Though important differences in attitudes or disposition may also point to different intersubjective experiences, rooted in the located and relative negotiation of power. A dialogue between two expats was drawn from an online forum, in order to represent such differing attitudes:

> Tctaft [middle age man –based on forum user photo]: The lady that cleans my house comes two days a week for about 1.5 to 2 hours each time. I pay her 55,000 per visit (gave her a 10% raise earlier this year). She's quiet, does a good job and stays out of my way. She speaks Vietnamese, I speak English. No time wasted on chit chat. She comes, she works, I pay, she leaves. Sometimes I have to go out before she leaves. No problem, she locks up when she's finished. Her name? Haven't a clue.
> NickinNam [middle age woman –based on forum user photo]: That's between $1.46 and $1.98 an hour. I'm just sayin'. Do you ever buy her flowers, give her a gift or a souvenir when you travel? I'm just sayin'.
> Tctaft: Christmas is coming .... Santa won't forget her. Gifts or souvenirs for her when I travel? Flowers? Do I look like Santa? Give 'em an inch, they take a mile. […] Yahoo, you're a big spender. Don't go stealing what's-her-name, my cleaning lady. (The new Hanoian –How much to pay a maid/cook –Answers for Hanoi, 2005-2012)

[171] "It is very common to have a maid in HCMC [Ho Chi Minh City]. They can be everything from a once a week cleaner to a live in maid and cook. Typical salaries are something like $3-7USD per day for non live-in and more for live-in. Many families with younger children also have nannies with similar or slightly higher salaries, depending on how long you need them each day." (ExpatWomen.com, 2001) Between 2009 and 2010, based on my experience in Hanoi, a relatively good wage for a part time housekeeper was 5$ for half a day (or about 100,000 VND per visit).

[172] "The concept of "Bourgeois" references the discursive construction of a simultaneously mythical and normative identity pertaining to and shaping Northern white middle-class subjects and, as such, always connotes whiteness." (Heron, 2007: 6)

It is striking to note the difference in attitudes. While some expatriates choose to treat their domestic help as mere servants or expendable staff, highlighting the power differential and in some cases an underlying sense of loathing; others may treat them as valued employees, or as honorary members of the family unit.[173] Yet, "[t]he fact that [expatriates] often employ a considerable number of staff well above the level of domestic help that they might have in their home country invites comparisons with colonial lifestyles." (Fechter & Walsh, 2010: 1209 [Footnote 2])

In fact most mainstream publications by and for expatriates continue to construct and treat the use of domestic workers as a non-controversial normative practice, which may in some cases underscore 'problems' in terms of cross-cultural communications, trust issues and/or failed expectations:

> In some cultures, people will say *yes* even if they don't understand, since it would be impolite or disrespectful to say *no* to a request from a person of authority or high status. [Par.] In all of our homes abroad in developing countries, there have been occasions when domestic help inadvertently damaged or ruined personal property […; m]any times […] because they were using household items which were unfamiliar to them. [… Par.] If you want to be sure that your household help understands your directions, you will most likely have to spend considerable time working with them. [… Par.] If a household object utensil or appliance is so important to you that you would be upset if it were ruined or stolen, don't let your domestic employees use it. […] Unfortunately situations can also occur when household help is accused of stealing objects that have merely been misplaced. For everyone's sake keep your valuables belongings, such as cash and expensive jewelry, secure. [Par.] Some expatriates complain of the theft of low-value items –food, cleaning products, T-shirts, even underwear– by household help. […Par. …] Especially if your employees

[173] A few expatriate respondents mentioned in the survey that their housekeeper(s) and/or nanny were "a godsend," "part of the family, now" and "a primary source of support." Though interestingly, out of the respondents who left such comments (2% out of the total sample of N=300 respondents), all were women, which may indicate women's greater reliance and emotional involvement in their relationship with their household help.

> have had little schooling, training may be necessary in matters of health, hygiene and safety […; and] an employee […] may not understand how [germs and bacteria] spread, [… thus] wiping the kitchen counters with the same dirty rag […] used to clean the bathrooms! (Hess & Linderman, 2007: 91-92)

Though such an account is meant to provide "guidance" to other expats, it is also bound up within the same discursive and ideological frame as colonial and imperial attitudes. Cook (2007) recorded similar practices and discourses, in her work on Western development workers in Northern Pakistan, denoting expatriates' tendency to reproduce ethnocentric and orientalist rhetoric. In fact this represents, as suggested by both Stoler (1995, 1997a and 1997b) and Fechter (2007) an uncanny link to practices of boundary maintenance between 'civilized identities' and the imagined 'savage' or 'native'.

> Stoler examines […] the continuous efforts of Europeans living in the colony to distance themselves from the 'natives', thereby asserting and maintaining their European identities. Within this situation Stoler specifically attends to what she calls the 'quotidian technologies of self affirmation' developed by Europeans (Stoler, 1995: 113). These technologies include instructions on housekeeping, childrearing and issues of domestic hygiene. […] A key issue discussed by Stoler, which resonates with expatriates, concerns the negotiation between Europeans' lifestyle and what are considered 'Western values' on the one hand, and [… native] influences on the other. (Fechter, 2007: 84-85)

Here, Fechter (2007) interprets Stoler in terms of the relevance of her work in expatriate studies. However, the main goals of Stoler (2002) is to account for colonialism, using ethnography, in a way that acknowledges the role of colonizers, particularly in (re)producing categories that speak unassumingly of 'given' power differentials (involving race, gender and class), but that underscore more complex dynamics within the realm of the intimate entanglements, or contact/relations, between 'colonizers' and 'colonized'. Despite the fact that Fechter's (2007) reading of Stoler (2002) is rather narrow, it is important to identify the

domestic sphere, as the prime site of intimate relations between expatriates and host country nationals.

In this space, expatriate employers and Vietnamese domestics are often drawn up by practices of boundary maintenance that go further than "peevish squabbles over cultural styles. These are part of a wider set of standards" (Stoler, 2002: 6) that ensure the dominance and reproduction of Western values. In fact, in order to bridge Western values and expectations, and Vietnamese competencies (or perceived lack thereof), the Vietnam Canada Vocational School, which opened in 2009 –thanks to an initiative by a prominent Vietnamese-born Canadian entrepreneur– is meant to 'help' Vietnamese students finish their high school and become trained in housekeeping and beauty care among other vocational options. (Nguyen Trang & Vu Thi Hai Anh, 2010) This example, not in the least short of reproducing cross-cultural and inter-ethnic dynamics –and hinting at a neo-imperial division of labor–, is also a fine example of the way Westernized ethnic-Vietnamese actors of elite rank, and their guarantors, contribute to the global capitalist enterprise by 'streamlining' Vietnamese nationals into global service industries aimed at enhancing the quality of life of the rich, including transnational professionals and the likes. Fechter goes on to confirm that expatriates' practices

> can be seen as attempts to maintain, and sometimes transcend boundaries between a symbolic 'West' and [the developing host country's culture]. The West has connotations of 'civilization', order, and purity, while Indonesia [like Vietnam perhaps] stands for non-civilisation [sic], disorder and pollution, in physical and symbolic terms. (Fechter, 2007: 85)

For this reason, 'schools' that teach Vietnamese nationals how to work 'like' and 'for' Westerners –or at least for the 'upper class', just as books that teach Westerners how to

'deal' with the potential incompetence of their domestic staff can be seen as fitting within and enduring paternalistic neo-colonial paradigm.

Through expatriate practice, then, we can begin to decode how strategies of class and inter-ethnic boundary maintenance are deployed. And in this case, again, survey results are telling, as respondents were given the opportunity to specify the duties of their domestic staff. Accordingly, on N=173 responses detailing the duties of domestic staff, 97.7% reported employing a maid or housekeeper with responsibilities revolving around cleaning, laundry and ironing, cooking, shopping, running errands and paying bills (either fulltime, part time or occasionally). For expatriates who are unfamiliar with local ways of 'doing things', carrying out seemingly simple household maintenance tasks can be tricky without a Vietnamese friend willing to act as interpreter or intermediary. Therefore relying on a Vietnamese housekeeper or maid to help carry out such tasks represents the next best option, even if this approach entails 'situational avoidance' –a cross-cultural adaptive strategy that impedes direct cultural learning. The paradox in this situation is that expatriates, while being in a position of power, which reifies their high status in relation to domestic workers, are also, like many migrants in a foreign cultural environment, in a weak position, vulnerable, due to their relative cultural incompetence in their new receiving context, and in need of practical assistance.

In fact, there may be a direct link between difficulties encountered within the fields of household management and the adaptation of expatriates, particularly accompanying spouses and parents with dependent children. According to Briody and Chrisman (1991)

> spouses experience a more difficult adjustment to the host country culture […] because the spouses' primary responsibilities concern the management of household affairs. Such activities cannot remain unattended for any length of time and thus force the spouses to interact immediately, and with little if any orientation, to the host country culture. (Briody & Chrisman, 1991: 268)

Conversely, without appropriate help, career expatriates with trailing family members may well be vulnerable to stressors emerging from the negotiation of multiple markers of differentiation revolving around work, household management duties, spousal support, family responsibilities, and parenting, on top of their own cross-cultural adjustments in multiple fields of practice/relations.

> Inter-role stress occurs when role expectations "from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role" (Kahn et al., 1964: 19). This is especially threatening when one domain is dependent on resources from another (Burke, 1991), as in the case of work–family conflict (e.g., Gutek et al., 1991). For example, with new job responsibilities, the international assignee may become less available at home for routine tasks and emotional support. The accompanying spouse, who is given increased domestic responsibilities, may begin to feel overwhelmed or neglected (Shahnasarian, 1991). (Shaffer et al., 2001: 101)

Thus reliance on housekeeping staff seems like an effective strategy to relieve some of the burden associated with carrying out household management duties in a foreign cultural environment, which may be taxing for newcomers.

Within the cohort of expatriates who live fulltime or part time with dependent children, 85.7% used the services of a domestic worker, some with child-caring responsibilities.[174] Comparatively, only 54% of expatriates not living with any dependent

[174] Drawing on survey data, cross-tabulation of respondents answers (living full time or part time with at least one dependent child and detailing the duties of their domestic employees) revealed that 33.7% of

children used the services of domestic staff. As such, expatriate parents may be more likely to hire household 'help', taking advantage of the accessible cost of 'domestic labor' in order to lighten the household management load and offset the consequence of not having, locally, extended family members to rely on for help (with childcare and housework especially).

As mentioned, in the context of transnational family formats, the roles of family members in helping out with childcare can no longer be fulfilled, which brings to the fore the very real and practical challenge of finding and ensuring quality childcare support while overseas. Local nannies, despite the fact that they may eventually end up as honorary members of expatriate families, work as 'family servants', undergoing forms of 'training' in order to meet the cultural expectations of their foreign employers. This, indeed, recalls colonial power dynamics. On the same token, private in-home childcare is considerably more affordable in Vietnam, compared to average costs in the Western world, which explains the appeal of living and working in the developing world, especially while children are still young. Adjacently, the advantageous salary offered to expatriates combined with the low cost of living make it possible to live comfortably as a 'one-salary household'. From Jasmine's point of view, "this is a great place to live, with very, very little "challenge" […in light of] the luxury we enjoy here. In the UK, I would never have been able to be a 'stay at home Mum' to my child and live just on my husband's salary and still enjoy the kind of lifestyle we do. No challenge can compete with that!" Indeed, such privileged conditions speak to the socio-economic status boost

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respondents who live with dependent children employ a domestic employee with nannying or childcare responsibilities.

and enhanced 'buying power' that is entailed when expatriates move from the Western world to Vietnam. Therefore the conditions that underscore such pervasive socio-economic inequalities, while being advantageous for expatriate parents, also entail significant privileges for most, if not all, Western expatriates.

6.2-. Survey results and expat families: Parenting and contingencies in family formats

Studies on expatriates tend to reproduce an individualistic conception of expatriation and of the adaptation process abroad. As such, "research on expatriate assignments has paid only comparatively little attention to expatriate families, focusing instead on the adjustment of individuals." (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008: 324-325) This is due in part to the pervasive tendency to view expatriation, not as a personal and social life experience, but rather in terms of a problematic surrounding human resources management and labor performance. Consequently, the literature on expatriate households and families is limited and theory building around the topic is still in its infancy.[175]

> Cohen's (1977) extensive review of expatriate communities had a few words to say about the expatriate family. He pointed out that expatriate communities tend to be male-centered, that while the husband's working life is "continuous" the wife bears the burden of transferring family life, and that those women who had worked at home but had to stop while abroad faced the most difficult situation. At the beginning of the 1980s, Tung published some influential articles (Tung, 1981, 1982, 1984), in which she identified the family as a critical success factor in expatriate

[175] "Cleveland et al. (1960) were among the first authors to include a family perspective in a book on living abroad. Nash (1967, 1969) included the "domestic side of a foreign existence" as part of his study of American expatriates in Spain in the early 1960s. Hays (1971, 1974) investigated factors playing a role in success and failure of expatriate employees. To the variables commonly studied at the time he added preparation and support by the company, language skills, and the adaptability and supportiveness of the family among others." (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008: 325)

> assignments. [… Par …] Harvey (1985) pointed out that, despite this, research on expatriate assignments did not pay much attention to families. […] His and Tung's contributions could be called "expatriate-centric", because spillover from the family into the work domain is the reason for the family focus. (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008: 325)

Both the household and the family are at the centre of expatriates' lives, and it is impossible to abstract the household as a field of practice/relation, parenting roles, and family life stage, from an analysis of expatriate experience overseas, particularly as it pertains to adaptation and cross-cultural adjustment.

As noted, part of the problem stems from a focus on 'labor', notably the biases of research in privileging the problematic of corporate expatriate adaptation and functional cross-cultural effectiveness at work, at the expense of a holistic, or broader vantage point, that takes into account an expatriates multiple intersecting roles, and the relational dynamics of the family unit as a whole, along with the crossover effects between expats and their accompanying partner[176] (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008: 325), and their children. While an increasing volume of research looks at expatriate spouses, greater attention is still placed on the impact of the accompanying spouse's adjustment on the success and completion of the working expatriate's assignment overseas. Furthermore, the focus on 'labor' and 'effectiveness' only deters attention from the subjective experiences of many expatriates in their central roles as parents and as spouses within their family unit. While work has taken centre stage within the scholarship on expatriation, household and family-related priorities and practices have not been

[176] Black and colleagues (Black and Stephens, 1989; Black and Gregersen, 1991a, b; Black et al., 1991; Stephens and Black, 1991) looked at partner adjustment as a separate area for research. In addition, they investigated the crossover between partner and expatriate adjustment. Forster (1992) offered a theoretical contribution in answer to Black et al. (1991) that gave the partner and family more prominence in the overall model. Yet the model itself remained rather unclear." (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008: 325)

substantively linked to processes of cross-cultural adaptation, especially in the context of settlement in developing countries.

However, dominant research perspectives on corporate expatriation often neglect to consider how adaptation imperatives in a new cultural context involves expatriates in all their different roles, not only as 'workers', 'managers', and 'employees', but also as husband/wife (Briody & Chrisman, 1991), but especially as parents. For expatriates

> [t]his implies that they have to leave their familiar surroundings to start a new life in a different country, often together with spouse and children. About 80% of the international [corporate] expatriates around the world are married and more than 70% take their children with them on the international assignment (Black, Gregersen, & Wethli, 1990). It is not difficult to imagine that such a transition is enormously difficult for all family members. The family has to start a new life in a new environment, often within a cultural context that strongly differs from their own familiar culture. They leave their friends and relatives behind and therefore have to build up a complete new social network. Surprisingly, in deciding who will be sent abroad, most companies do not consider the ability of the expatriate families to adapt and to function effectively in a new cultural environment (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992). (Ali et al., 2003: 564)

While the wellbeing and satisfaction of accompanying spouses are known to play a decisive role in the successful adjustment of expatriates[177] (Briody & Chrisman, 1991, Bikos et al., 2007; Van Erp et al., 2011), little attention has been given to the effects of parental duties and anxieties on the adaptation process of expatriate parents, whether they work or not.

[177] "In recent years, attention has also included the expatriate spouse. The importance of the expatriate spouse's role on the employee's intent to stay on the assignment has been clearly established (Black & Stephens, 1989; Caligiuri, Hyland, Joshi, & Bross, 1998; Fukuda & Chu, 1994). In fact, in a meta-analytic review of 12 predictors of adjustment for the expatriate employee, the spouse's adjustment was the most salient (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005)." (Bikos et al., 2007: 6)

How does parenting, as a disposition, or dimension of habitus, influence the perception and experience of expatriates, and therefore the articulation of anxieties and stresses? Expatriates with dependent children are likely to experience life overseas through their social roles as parents, and their adaptation may well be contingent on their child's (children's) and spouse's well being. Cook (2007) highlights one particular case where a respondent explicitly admits that her household priorities and related anxieties are completely geared towards her son's welfare and comfort, acknowledging the need to reproduce particular elements of her internalized construct of 'home' in order to influence her child's socialization. (Cook, 2007: 10) While Cook (2007) focuses on the articulation of imperial identities, I see this example as telling of the underlying positionality and dispositions of expat parents and their perception of the adaptation imperative which are imposed by the internalization of living standard expectation and the assumed socialization requirement of their children.

The parenting positionality and dispositional propensities of expatriates has not been theorized using the notion of Bourdieu's habitus and theory of practice. Expatriates' relative social position as parents imparts various responsibilities/obligations that other expatriates may not share, notably with regards to the conciliation of work, family, household maintenance and leisure activities. Moreover, personal dispositions as father/mother impart concerns and desires that specifically pertain to their subjective priorities within the family unit. In turn, expatriates with dependent children are also likely to perceive structural and cultural conditions through their 'parental lens', which then influences the adaptive practice. In this process, I want to underline the particular

significance of the affect, of the 'emotional realities' that emerge from the visceral impulses and drives of the parental habitus.

Considering the importance of family in the adaptation process of expatriates, Ali et al. (2003) attempted to measure the cohesion and adaptability of expatriated family units as systemic entities, while Haslberger and Brewster (2008) proposed to use an adjacent systems approach known as the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response model to assess strains and coping capabilities of the family unit. The risk however, in examining the family unit as a system, is that it abstracts the fact that parenting responsibilities and duties are unevenly distributed based on gender and occupation, and that the emotional strain of one parent may not reflect the experience of the other parent. It disguises the fact that relative parenting positionality incurs differentiated costs and rewards, which are experienced subjectively, affecting parents distinctly, on the basis also of gender, marital status, occupation, class, but also personal/social dispositions. In fact, a systemic approach is bound to sidestep considerations on the subjective reality of parents, which extends from the intersections of their social positions and habitus, as men/women, father/mother, spouse, worker, national cultural origins, etc.[178]

Not withstanding the implications of gender and sexuality in the experience of expatriates in Vietnam, or the effects of structural forces in the configuration of gender and sexual scripts in Vietnamese society[179] (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5), evidence

[178] The benefit of a systems approach is that it accounts for the inextricable role of expatriate parents in the adjustment of the family unit as a whole. However, the drawback, is that it whitewashes the personal experience of expatriate parents, notably as their roles as workers, spouse, parents may intersect.

[179] "Vietnam is still very much a patriarchal society. In Confucianism, the patriarchal family is the main unit of society, in which duties and obligations are delineated as those of a family to a father, a child to a parent, a wife to a husband, [etc. …] This explains the pressure placed on women by their husbands and in-

suggests that family arrangements and parenting roles have a significant impact on the experiences of expatriates in Vietnam. Based on the testimonies and narratives that are presented in the following section, I suggest that parenting responsibilities and the embodiment of parenting roles have a direct impact on adaptive practices. Ways of being/thinking/doing in the receiving context must be adapted to family childrearing and caring requirements. Decisions, mannerisms, family structures and routines, household rules, as well as domestic and living standard expectations will inevitably be affected by the presence of dependent children in the home. So that expatriate adaptation/adjustment as well as cross-cultural adaptation/adjustment will be contingent not only on personal and professional adjustment, but also on parental adjustment, on top of the crossover effects of spouse and child adjustment. Moreover, difficult positional negotiations will be experienced in very personal and subjective ways, and may not necessarily affect the family unit directly, as expatriates may 'protect' or 'shield' the family unit from the stressors or strains that are experienced at work or in other fields of practice/relations. In fact, the intersection of markers of differentiation, along with situational contingencies affecting transnational family resettlement, may have a profound influence on expatriates' adaptation and life satisfaction abroad.

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laws to produce male heirs. In addition, sons are still viewed as their parents' main source of support in old age. It is said that many men tell their wives before marriage that they want to have "a girl as lovely as you," but after marriage that they want only sons. In many cases, it is common for women to say that they want to give their husbands a son or, if pregnant, to say that they feel that the baby will be a son. [Par.] As one Vietnamese woman put it, many women contribute to making their daughters second-class citizens: "Instead of opposing her husband's unequal idea, she anxiously awaits the ultrasound result, completely forgetting that she has become the slave of another's thinking. The climax is 'showing off' the gender of the baby and feeling pity for the others because they are waiting to have a child who is the same 'kind' as you." (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005: 73)

> Fukuda and Chu (1994: 42) observe that the family of an expatriate has a profound impact on the success of international assignments. However, they note that little attention is directed toward the expatriate family's circumstances. […] Furthermore, Enderwick and Hodgson (1993: 419) report the results of a survey indicating that the inability of the family to settle accounted for 34 percent of expatriate failures.[180] (Anderson, 1999: 53)

As such, expatriates have a role to play in facilitating the adaptation of accompanying spouses and/or trailing children.

> Children must attend new schools, perhaps learn a new language, make new friends, and adjust to a complete transformation of their physical environments (Cornille, 1993; Munton, 1990). Such wide-ranging changes […] create a crucible for stress, forcing expatriates to struggle for balance within and between [… multiple] domains. (Shaffer et al., 2001: 100)

An expatriate, by being part of a family unit and by taking up parental responsibilities, will be inevitably concerned with the hurdles that affect his/her spouse and/or children, and these anxieties will overlap with those that are imparted by professional/vocational fields.

Within the scholarship on expatriation, there is a growing interest in the children of expatriates and their experience overseas, giving rise to a number of terms to describe their transience or their cultural bi- or poly-focality.

> Children of corporate employees, military and government personnel, missionaries and aid workers are subjected to a wide variety of different cultures and experiences, as their parents move from one country to the

[180] "When an expatriate assignment fails, significant costs are incurred to the organization. Mendenhall et al. (1987: 331) cite a number of authors when they note that the average cost per failure to the parent company has been observed to range between $55 000 and $150 000. In recognition of the costs associated particularly with failed expatriate assignments, a number of writers have made recommendations about the manner in which such assignments can be effectively managed, including Shilling (1993) and Oddou (1991: 302), who indicates that the effective management of expatriates includes attention to their selection, preparation, support and reintegration (repatriation)" (Anderson, 1999: 51); thus it seems strange that little attention is given to the way expatriates' adaptation overseas is modulated by parenting and family roles and responsibilities.

> next. These internationally mobile children and adolescents are known as cultural hybrids (Bhabha, 1994), global nomads (McCaig, 1992; Grappo, 2008), cultural chameleons (McCaig, 1996; Smith, 1996) and third culture kids (Useem, Donoghue, & Useem, 1963). Mainstream literature favors the term third culture kids, as it focuses primarily on the children of parents living abroad.[181] (Moore & Barker, 2012: 553)

Though comparatively little attention has been paid to parenting, notably the choices that are made, the pressures and stressors that are felt, and the practices that are deployed by expatriate parents within the host country. The paucity of research on this subject also impedes our understanding of the conditions that affect each family, and therefore every expatriate parent distinctly.

> Global nomads are raised for the most part by parents living far from home and family; they [expatriate parents] must rely on their natural instincts, the support of new communities, and whatever resources they can find to help them make their decisions. Every family is unique and will require different choices. (Pascoe, 2006: 2)

Indeed, beyond the practical implications of parental concerns, expatriate parents are personally and subjectively engaged as key players in the family unit and as active facilitators in the cross-cultural adaptation of their children (Mclachlan, 2007) and in securing conditions conducive to their well being, security and happiness overtime.

Research results suggest that family concerns go beyond the responsibilities and concerns associated with caring for dependent children. Parenting concerns inevitably extend to the subjective experiences that are produced by alternate family formats, whether expatriates have minor or adult children overseas, or whether parenting takes place in single parent households or dual-career households. The contingencies affecting

[181] "A person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. [... He/she] builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into [his/her] life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background." (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009: 13)

family formats are difficult to sum up, although survey results help identify some key differences. On N=295 responses, 57.3% reported not having any biological children, while 42.7% reported having children of their lineage. However, in order to account for a wider range of family situations and family life stage, respondents were asked more specific questions relating to their family situation. On N=293 responses, 70.7% did not live with children in Vietnam, a situation that affords a greater degree of freedom on a daily basis and major differences in the range of their daily concerns altogether. Comparatively, 27.6% of respondents reported living with children fulltime, and 1.7% part time.

In short, notwithstanding the number of survey respondents who abstained from answering this question, expatriate parents represent close to a third of the sample of respondents. The survey also asked respondents to specify whether they have minor and or adult children overseas. Accordingly, on N=291 responses 6.2% of respondents reported having minor children (under the age of 18) overseas, with a 1 to 2.6 –woman to man ratio. This gender ratio indicates that compared to women, men seem to be more likely to leave minor children behind, either in the care of their mothers or family members, or in boarding schools for example.[182] Although this seems 'convenient', as it may help expats avoid positional conflicts, while lightening the load of pressures in the receiving context, survey respondents who were in this situation considered it as a

[182] Although, since questions on family situations were not mutually exclusive –allowing for considerations on the variety of family circumstances, this information does not stipulate that male respondents could not also, be living with children at the time of survey completion. They could have both: grown up and/or minor children overseas or in Vietnam, as well as dependent children living with them in Vietnam. In fact, the gender ratio of respondents who were living with children (full time and part time) at the time of survey completion is almost even, with 47.7% (men) and 52.3% (women).

'challenge'. Rick for example explained: everything is "Pretty easy, other than missing my son [who is] in Korea" and Taylor corroborates this, noting that "missing out on children growing up" was experienced as a frustration and as a source of grief.

Adjacently, on N=292 responses, 16% (with a 1 to 1.92 – woman to man ratio) reported having adult ('grown up') children overseas; so their parental concerns, as Don mentions, may revolve around "[m]issing events (weddings, birthdays, graduations, etc)." This confirms that expatriate parents experience relative frustrations based on their specific family situation, notably the life-stage of their children. Survey results also revealed that other respondents have children in Vietnam, but don't live with them (2.4% on N=293 responses, with a 1 to 2.5 –woman to man ratio), in which case priorities may revolve around the establishment of 'visitation time' or post-separation parent-conflict resolution.

The gender ratio provided above suggests that parenting dispositions are deeply rooted in gendered differences. As survey results seem to suggest, male respondents may be more likely than women to have children they are not living with, which points to possible gendered discrepancies regarding the configuration of the 'parenting habitus'. As such, the internalization of parental roles and related categories of being affect expatriates differently based on gender, considering the pervasive cultural norms that place the burden of child rearing on women. Furthermore, cross-tabulation of responses regarding marital status and living with dependent children, reveals that out of N=293 cases, 2.7% of respondents reported being single parents (with dependent children living at home), and of these cases, all were women. Certainly single expatriate household with dependent

children represent a minority of cases, although these only reiterate how problematic assumptions about 'typical expat family models' tend to neglect alternate arrangements and the located adaptive challenges these imply. Aside from the added strain that single parenthood imposes on family resettlement abroad, Vietnamese society is not particularly 'open' to such alternative family formats. As one expat-blogger explains, for single parents, especially single expatriate mothers, it may be wise to

> [p]repare your story: [Par.] Vietnam is a very conservative society, with most young people living with their parents into their 20s, and remaining at home even after they're married. Young people couple up early and when you look around it seems no one ever ventures out alone — it's all couples. Single mothers exist in Vietnam but they're usually quite alienated from society. (The Dropout Diaries, 2011)

While single expat mothers may face cultural stigma within the Vietnamese receiving context, practical challenges related to finding adequate childcare solutions may also add pressure.

Meanwhile, dual-career expat households with dependent children are also in the shadow of mainstream scholarship on expatriation, particularly in assessing adjustment contingencies, which affect parenting practices. The bulk of research on expatriate dual career families has been focused on work-related decisions or rather, on the corporate/institutional human resource policies that may affect dual career expatriate couples[183]; thus, while parenting, as a key intersecting role, tends to be overlooked.

> Support for family and trailing spouse have been identified as important factors contributing to job satisfaction, family/work conflict reduction,

[183] Given that most expatriate benefits packages were designed to meet the needs of traditional families, e.g., employed husband, non-employed wife and children, companies should be prepared to modify their compensation and particularly benefit packages to meet the needs of dual-career couples relocated overseas (Adler, 1993; Adler & Izraeli, 1994). Many companies surveyed did not make these modifications to accommodate dual-career couples (Harvey, 1989)." (Harvey, 1995: 235)

> lower employee productivity, and the well-being of individuals in dual-career [spousal] relationships (Bird & Bird 1986; Frone & Rice 1987; Wiley 1987). (Harvey, 1995: 235)

Unfortunately, and despite the fact that Harvey (1995) discusses the impact of international relocation on the family unit at different stages of the family life-cycle, 'parenting' as a key gender role that intersects with career choices and social life, is seldom considered in terms of its impact on adaptation imperatives. Although Harvey (1995) concedes that women in dual-career household still perform much of the parenting, and that this may put them at risk of stressor overload depending on the family life cycle and the career life-cycle.

Then, to account for other contingencies affecting the constitution of families, and therefore the experience of expatriate parents and parents-to be, we should also consider those respondents who reported having adopted Vietnamese children (1.7%), and those who reported waiting to adopt a Vietnamese child (1%) (on N=293 responses), as well as cross tabulation results for those respondents who reported being in a spousal relationship with a Vietnamese national and living with dependent children (7.8% on N=283 valid cases)[184]. In bicultural families involving an expatriate, a Vietnamese spouse and their children, or in cases involving adopted Vietnamese children, parental concerns may revolve around the negotiation of cultural bifocality within the family dynamic. As Gupta and Ferguson (1992) argue, the global conditions that blur cultural boundaries and create new configurations of transnational identities demand that we "remain sensitive to the profound "bifocality" that characterizes locally lived lives in a globally interconnected

[184] 22.2% of N=81 respondents living with dependent children and/or 37.3% of N=59 respondents involved in a spousal relationship with a Vietnamese national.

world, and the powerful role of place in the "near view" of lived experience (Peters, 1992)." (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992: 11) In such cases, parenting positionality may well intersect simultaneously with gender, race/ethnicity, and national culture, thereby affecting family configurations and adaptive practices.

Meanwhile, for 'soon-to-be-parents' waiting to adopt, primary concerns may rest on the negotiation of the bureaucratic and regulatory framework surrounding the adoption process in Vietnam. Moreover, 1.4% of respondents reported having an adopted child of another ethnic origin, which may entail social integration concerns, especially if the child is black/African –due to the pervasiveness of racist prejudice in Vietnamese society. In essence, such cases confirm that parental concerns are relative to specific family situations.

Aside from the contingencies that affect the constitution of expatriate families, we ought to bear in mind that the life stage of a child may also serve as a contingency factor, influencing parenting priorities and concerns as part of the resettlement process abroad. Yet, while the life stage of children has been linked to clear effects on his/her adaptation overseas, few studies examine the link between the adaptation of expat children and the experience of expatriate parents, not only in terms of their effects on work performance (through role conflicts), but also in terms of everyday practices, subjective sensibilities and struggles.

> Forster (1997) showed that children indeed experience substantial problems with adapting to new schools and making new friends (see also Vernberg, 1990). Feelings of uncertainty and loss of identity are commonly reported. Feelings of uncertainty may be the strongest in the periods prior to and during the first months of relocation. Expatriate children who are going through puberty may also face emotional problems

> (Stuart, 1992). [… Par.] International companies tend to neglect the potential problems that expatriate children face while adapting to the host country (De Leon & McPartlin, 1995). This lack of attention is hard to understand, since the well-being of expatriate children may strongly affect expatriates' work performance (Caligiuri, Hyland, & Joshi, 1998) and also the chances of successful completion of the international business assignment (Fukuda & Chu, 1994; Yurkiewicz & Rozen, 1995). (Van der Zee et al., 2007: 26)

For expatriates who have one or more accompanying offspring, knowing that cross-cultural relocation may be especially challenging for children may spur added concerns about a child's conduct, wellbeing, academic achievement, and degree of life satisfaction and happiness. (Öry et al., 1991) More generally however, expatriate children are believed to be susceptible to specific challenges[185], notably in defining what and where 'home' is, and where/how they 'fit in' –in relation to their residence/host country, citizenship, extended family, local and transnational friends, etc.[186] (Baker, 2007; Grimshaw & Sear, 2008)

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[185] "School-age children's situation is […] relatively structured. Details depend on whether the school is an international or local one, and whether the language of instruction is familiar or new to the child. Local school systems are very different in how they structure the learning experience, the type of child behavior that is rewarded and the design of the curriculum. Therefore, the demands children face – because of possible differences in schooling from country to country – are potentially broader in range than those of either of the parents. But research on the adjustment of expatriate children hardly exists (De Leon and McPartlin, 1995; Miyamoto and Kuhlman, 2001)." (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008: 334-335)

[186] "Answers to questions about home -"where is home" or "where do you feel most at home" provide [some] insight. "Everywhere and Nowhere" resonates with most TCKs [Third Culture Kids].(7) "Where my family is" serves the mobile TCKs, even if they have never been to that country. A particularly revealing answer is "where I am foreign, I don't especially care where; what I know is how to be foreign." […] As is the case with "home" TCKs neither feel they "belong" completely to their TCK country nor to their passport country. […] Initially feeling extremely marginalized, they become comfortable, but most never feel entirely one with that nationality/culture. […] TCKs incorporate a feeling of connection with all the countries and peoples they have experienced as a TCK, but ownership of none. [… Notbaly,] ATCKs [American Third Culture Kids] tend to resist being put into established categories. But the lack of a group, an "ethnic group," with which they can identify is a source of frustration and concern to most, especially the long-term ATCKs. Most just say "I don't fit" "I don't know where I belong" "no one understands me." Some do begin to understand where they belong but do not have a handy name for it." (Baker Cottrell, 2007: 60)

Although expatriates' work/family conflicts are increasingly taken into consideration in the scholarship on overseas adjustment, these are usually conceptualized in terms of their negative effects on work performance and little heed is given to the encroachment of work-related requirements on family-related duties. As such, increased demands in the work place, may significantly infringe upon parenting responsibilities, thus potentially worsening family dynamics and serving as a catalyst for additional parenting and spousal anxieties.[187]

> Given the upheaval of a move to a foreign culture, maintaining the role of a supporting spouse or caring parent may also require expatriates to devote more time to their family. With no relatives and fewer trusted neighbors or close friends on assignment, expatriates may feel more obligated to provide supplemental or support resources to deal with urgent or continuing family problems (e.g., someone to baby-sit, take care of a sick spouse, or pick up a child at school). (Shaffer et al., 2001: 104)

In fact, it is not uncommon for expatriates to become so caught up in their own adaptation process at work and in social or public settings, that children may suffer as collateral damage. "Too many couples disappear into the hectic expat social scene or workplace soon after arrival in a new place, leaving young children with a local caregiver who may eventually become a treasured member of the family but in the early days is just a scary stranger." (Pascoe, 2006: 2) As such, expatriate parents are likely to perceive the establishment of a work/family/social-life balance as an adaptation imperative with clear

[187] "Most expatriates also have difficult family responsibilities. Approximately 80% of international assignees [corporate/institutional expatriates] are accompanied by a spouse, children or both (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994; Stroh, Dennis, & Cramer, 1994). Although there is a growing body of research supporting the role of family variables in the adjustment of expatriates (Birdseye & Hill, 1995; Caligiuri, Hyland, Joshi & Bross, 1998; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998), these studies tend to be unidirectional and consider only the encroachment of family pressures on work, rather than bi-directional influences. Furthermore, an increasingly large number of dual-career couples are accepting international assignments (Harvey, 1997). The interface between work and family is apt to be even more salient for them (Shahnasarian, 1991)." (Shaffer et al., 2001: 100)

repercussion on family dynamics, and on the parental anxieties that may emerge in relation to their children's well being. According to Pascoe (2006),

> proactive parenting abroad is a necessity; children need their parents more after they have been uprooted, not less. […] Only recently have children's transition challenges and cross-cultural adjustments begun to be highlighted by an industry of intercultural trainers, coaches, and researchers; by organizations sending families abroad, and by the international schools expat children attend. […] (Pascoe, 2006: 2)

Recent scholarship on expatriate children's experience has highlighted the critical role of expatriate parents in their children's transition abroad. (Pascoe, 2006) Yet, an "unexplored area in expatriate studies is the influence that demands faced by children have on parents' adjustment." (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008: 335) Accordingly, we might want to explore "the ways in which adult issues associated with expatriate life (the moveable marriage, work-life balance challenges, culture shock, the cellular ties that bind) affect child-rearing [when it is] being done far from home." (Pascoe, 2006: 2)

As such, expatriate parents don't all face the same struggles, not only because social actors have different personalities and priorities, but also because gender, class, age, race/ethnicity, marital status, family life stage/format, national cultural background and occupational roles, may all intersect, thus influencing the way family and parental strains are experienced, on top of other adjustment imperatives. Considerations on the spousal, professional and social priorities of expatriate parents suggest that adaptation overseas is also contingent on overlapping adaptation imperatives, compelling multiple adjustments to changing life and work circumstances. Each of the above-mentioned scenarios are likely to involve specific efforts related to the negotiation of intersecting social positions, in resolving difficult positional negotiations, or in the maintenance of

relations at a transnational, national or local scale with various degrees of responsibility or involvement. In this sense, research results and a review of relevant literature supports the premise that differences in family arrangements/situations will have specific effects on the subjective experiences of expatriates, thereby affecting both: expatriate adaptation and cross-cultural adjustment.[188]

6.3-. The parenting habitus: anxieties that set expat parents apart

Moving and resettling overseas, far from friends and family, and into a different cultural context with a foreign language, can be taxing even in the best of circumstances. Add to that, the fact that Vietnam is a developing tropical country,[189] and conditions may seem less than optimal especially for expatriate parents, thus despite other perks related to the lower cost of living and the affordability of domestic help. In fact, expatriate testimonies and comparisons between the experiences of expats who have dependent children and those who do not, reveal noticeable differences, not only in the configuration of general concerns and priorities, and in their patterns of practice, but also at the level of the affect, in the articulation of anxieties and emotional load which adaptation imperatives create.

[188] Though expatriate parenting remains under-studied, a growing volume of resources now exist to guide parents, (Albright et al., 1986; Pascoe, 1993; Bowser, 1998; Jehle-Caitcheon, 2003) in supporting the transition of their children abroad. (Gleason, 1973; McCluskey, 1994; Brammer, 1995; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Stultz, 2003; Walters, 2007; Cottrell, 2007)

[189] Vietnam as a developing tropical country is afflicted by a number of locally specific health risks, including exposure to cholera outbreaks, schistosomiasis (bilharzias), dengue fever, avian flu, viral hepatitis, malaria (not so much in cities), hand foot and mouth disease, and the rapid spread of HIV, (WHO, 2012) which have all been reported within the past 5 years in the country.

Here, it is useful to speak of 'structures of feeling'[190] that emanate from various dimensions of habitus, and in this case from parental dispositions, in order to adequately conceptualize the process by which expatriate parents interpret the situations they face in their role as father/mother. Few studies highlight the connection between habitus and emotions, or between habitus and structures of feeling within the context of migration (Mckay 2006; Brooks & Simpson, 2012), and none I have found apply this conceptualization to parenting in a foreign cultural context, despite the acknowledgement that lifestyle migrant families tend to accommodate their cultural habitus while living abroad; and in turn, parents

> socialize their children into a class habitus that is cross-cut by nationality. Children [will then become] predisposed to act according to their [reference] group['s] habitus. After migration [… expat children] will make friends and acquire habits, tastes and ways of acting and thinking that are in tune with their parents' habitus but they will [also] begin to acquire some of the tastes and dispositions of the other children in school. But even where a habitus is being slowly developed over time, and in an entirely new and different set of circumstances from which the habitus of the parents are developed, external conditions will constrain one's choice and the tendency is to revert to [… the former]. (O'Reilly, 2009: 116)

Wilts focusing on the parental habitus and correlate social position, respondents' narratives highlight both the practical and emotional implications of their adaptive practices. For example, compared to expatriates without dependent children, expatriates

[190] The concept of 'structures of feeling' was put forth by Raymond Williams (1977) in the context of his work on *Marxism and Literature*. It alludes to the way social actors apprehend and experience "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs […]. We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and inter-relating continuity. We are then defining these elements as a 'structure': as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. […] We are also defining a social experience still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies." (Williams, 1977: 132)

who live with, and care for dependent children have different priorities, less flexible routines, a different realm of daily activities (on top of other occupational/professional duties), as well as parental anxieties that revolve around the happiness, wellbeing, social integration and education of their children. This is in addition to concerns about meeting their own basic needs and those of their spouse.

Exchanges from a focus group session aimed at comparing the experiences of accompanying spouses (based on whether or not participants have dependent children), revealed key differences between the priorities and dispositions of participants, notably in terms of their experiences upon arrival. Expatriate 'accompanying spouses' without children were less 'worried' about their material living conditions following their arrival in Vietnam. They tended to adopt a pragmatic mindset and seemed less inclined to plan the details of their daily and short-term schedules. They also had less stringent requirements for their living arrangements (including mobility, food, housing, etc.) and were less rushed to look for the necessary resources required to set up a household and a 'routine'. This cohort (accompanying expatriates without children), readily envisioned immediate or current projects related to their personal and professional development and a significant emphasis was placed on leisure, fun, cultural and regional exploration, travel, wellbeing, fitness, etc. Although one accompanying spouse expressed this 'freedom' as temporary, expressing her future plans "to start a family when we'll be properly established," thereby 'bracketing' short-term individualistic motivations and emphasizing, in a prospective sense, a parental aspiration and desire to experience motherhood.

In contrast, accompanying spouses with children generally expressed a greater sense of urgency to get the household in order as efficiently as possible, to secure access to education or adequate childcare supports, to establish a routine, to find a greater range of 'vital products' (from diapers and baby formula to high chairs, baby car seats, hypoallergenic soaps, school supplies, and so on), to locate the nearest resources from their residence, etc. Expatriate spouses with children placed an emphasis on the personal, social, physical and intellectual development of their kids, articulating immediate and current projects such as finding a good school, enrolling them in music lessons, Vietnamese language tutorials and swimming lessons, finding children's books in English, setting up playgroup scheduling, etc. These concerns further demonstrate how expatriate parents are emotionally engaged in the (re)production of constructs that substantiate the embodiment of fatherhood and motherhood; and how, in prioritizing their children's needs, they are motivated and under pressure to look for a wider range of resources within the receiving environment. The structure of feelings of these expatriate parents; thus seems configured by childrearing and caring priorities, which are internalized through a sense of duty, through introjections about proper parenting standards and ideas/assumptions about children's needs. Their motivations, enthusiasm as well as worries, are fundamentally linked to their ability to 'perform' their 'parenting role' according to their internalized values and expectations.

Conversely, expatriate without children were more inclined to meet other expatriates in bars and entertainment venues, while expatriate with children, especially primary caretakers, were more inclined to reach out to other parents and develop a social

network around the activities of their children. Here gender differences also surfaced based on interviews and focus group narratives, whereas fathers who participated in interviews placed a greater emphasis on their need for, and struggle to get enough 'personal and social leisure time'. Mothers, for their part, seemed more 'resolved', as a matter of perceived necessity, to sacrifice their entitlement to personal and social time, for the sake of their husband, children, household management, and other professional or philanthropic commitments. Thus, denoting the tendency of both working mothers and stay-at-home moms to perform the proverbial 'double or triple shift', in order to meet their internalized social expectations for being 'a good mother', 'a good wife', 'a good worker', 'a good friend', etc. Again, the emotional engagement of women in their various social roles as workers, spouse and mothers underscores common work-life-family balance issues and positionality stressors that may be compounded to cross-cultural adjustment difficulties.

Living abroad far from one's family and friends may be difficult for any expatriate, although for a family and dependent children it implies a number of additional concessions. Expatriate parents must contend with distance and the difficulty in ensuring family bonding between their children and their extended family. It also implies that they cannot rely on the same level or forms of support from family members, especially in terms of 'kin-care'. Melody, a survey respondent expressing such parental anxieties confirmed that being "[f]ar from family: you can't rely on a trustworthy person for some time off or helping out or immediate advice, [and] my child is not bonding with his grand

parents and family." As noted, such concerns are recurrent for expatriate parents. Thomas explains:

> Not having the support network we would have if we lived […back home, is a challenge]. While many family members and friends laugh at the fact we have a housekeeper/nanny, we don't have the access to aunts, uncles and grandparents that they do. My wife and I rarely go out together because [our child…] can't just be dropped off with nearby family members. [… Also he/she] doesn't get as much time with family […]. [She/He] will have less developed relationships with [her/his] cousins.

This is a typical compromise for most migrants including expatriates, in that homeland social capital stemming from the family network and circles of friends, is no longer accessible, which translates into a cost (having to pay for a nanny) and a loss (the child is missing out on important bonding experiences). Expatriate parents demonstrated acute sensibility to this problematic, acknowledging their desire for their children to come to know, recognize and love, their family members back home.

As such, beyond the practical dimension of childcare, the additional concerns surrounding the development/maintenance of strong family relations between children growing up overseas and their 'homeland kin' point to the challenge of cultivating a sense of 'closeness' (reminiscent of family cohesion) albeit the distance that separates family members. Although transnational family formats are increasingly common, it is still unclear how expatriate children are affected by the lack of physical proximity to their kin. Based on testimonies, such concerns seem to relate to a parental fear, a projection of the type of habitus the child will develop as a result of being socialized so far away from the rest of the family. This 'fear' perhaps concerns the risk that the child will not internalize fundamental notions and feelings emanating from the structure and culture of

the extended family unit. The 'hope' that children can develop meaningful family attachments underscores the role of the 'family' as a unit of reference, the locus of deep bonds developed over one's lifetime. Living overseas for extended periods may compromise the internalization of kinship feelings in expatriate children, which is translated into parental concerns.

Establishing a household in a developing country may entail contending with cultural differences, as well as structural and infrastructural conditions that are perceived as hurdles, shortcomings or deficiencies, despite the many 'advantages' that an expatriate lifestyle affords. For expatriate parents in Vietnam, advantages revolve around the affordability of 'household help' and the relative accessibility of private education; while counter-balancing disadvantages may include inconsistent quality in healthcare services, as well as other compounding issues such as hazardous urban conditions in city centers (especially related to traffic), a lack of children-friendly spaces, and institutional limitations in school education. Expatriates' testimonies reveal a subjective understanding of local conditions, and a relative degree of adaptability in the face of unfamiliar circumstances. While some expatriate parents are tolerant of local conditions, others express outrage and shock to the point of 'wanting to leave Vietnam'. From mild-mannered tolerance to uncompromising outlooks, expatriate parents personalize their 'child caring anxieties' is various ways, and it is mainly their emotional involvement in the wellbeing of their children that stands out as the common thread between expat parents' narratives. This also reflects different forms of adaptive practices, whereas mild-mannered tolerance may be regarded as an approach that exemplify greater degrees of

flexibility and open-mindedness, while uncompromising outlooks speak of a certain rigidity in expat parents' resolve to maintain specific standards related to family maintenance and childrearing and caring.

Parental concerns can revolve around a variety of issues, notably surrounding health and safety. Indeed, a number of expatriate parents have expressed their concerns about 'deficient health care standards', and in doing so, revealed intense anxieties by virtue of their parental priorities and caring disposition. Exposure to local hospital and medical services may be experienced as 'shocking' and characterized as 'substandard', particularly through a comparative lens that pins Western health care facilities (perceived as superior) against developing world services.

> [TRANSLATION FROM A FRENCH INTERVIEW]
> Bernard [European, mid-forties]: [My child] fell down the stairs and had an open wound on his forehead. Immediately we went to the nearest hospital for some stitches and a check up. My wife is Vietnamese so communicating with the hospital staff is not a problem. The emergency beds were in fact dirty straw mats laid out on a metal-framed bed. There was no way I was going to let [my child] lie on that so I held [him/her] until we were offered a proper bed with a clean sheet. […] The toilet of the emergency room had no soap and no toilet paper […] so you can imagine the lack of hygiene norms. […] The doctor recommended a CAT scan. […] On our way to the scanner room, I was shocked to see motorbikes passing in the same hallway where my child, in a hospital bed with a head wound, had to pass. No, but the shock: [tone of voice is intense] motorbikes maneuvering around the hospital bed while we were trying to wheel it in perpendicularly into the scanner room. [My wife] saw the expression of terror on my face. […] I said "Never again are we returning to a Vietnamese hospital, Never again!" [sarcastic laugh …] but I guess it will depend on the urgency. Finally [my child] had nothing but I keep this traumatic memory of the dirty straw mats in the emergency and the motorbikes in the hospital hallway…

In this example, Bernard's habitus is deeply confronted to a foreign situation where hygiene standards and protocols differ markedly from those he is used to in France; as

such, he felt scandalized and in shock. While Bernard had integrated norms of strict hygiene in the field of 'hospital care', he was witnessing different standards in this field of practice. He remains traumatized and said he would try to avoid dealing with Vietnamese hospitals rather than being confronted to 'below standard' hygiene. He explained that: [translation from French] "It doesn't bother me to have to pay more for better medical services, especially when my child is concerned!" Again, in the face of stressful situations and when the welfare of their children is at stake, expatriates seem to experience greater degrees of anxieties but also an acceptance of the additional costs incurred to avoid what they consider as 'substandard conditions'.

Another expatriate parent recounts his experience with medical infrastructure from the point of administrative organization, highlighting how the anxieties he faced for the sake of his child, rose above normal levels.

> Ernst [European, middle age man]: Usually I am quite patient with authorities and administrative officials. I know that the system [in Vietnam] is not intuitive in the least, from the point of view of users. [… But] when [my child] was sick [… with what] we think […] is dengue fever, the hospital asked so many little things of me before they could administer some medicine, it was quite nerve-racking! Go here to get the prescription, then go there to pay for it, then go somewhere else to pick it up, just to discover that first I had to go open a patient file for the prescription to be dispensed. I thought that was already done since [… my kid] was already admitted. I was getting the run around. [… sarcastic laugh … pause] At the patient registry counter I became impatient and raised my voice. All this time, they are making me run around, my child is in pain and I have to figure out how the hospital functions because no one gave me clear instructions. [… Loosing my composure] was effective apparently. I received the medicine in 2 minutes.

Although Ernst's used the service of a private international hospital, his experience denotes the fact that parenting anxieties elevate stress levels even in situations that are not

'emergencies' or 'extreme cases'. Although Ernst conceded to being usually 'patient and composed', the pressure to tend to his child's welfare and wellbeing got the better of him. In the cases of Bernard and Ernst, what stands out is that their role as parents (fathers) served as catalyst for added stresses and frustrations, considering the conditions they encountered in Vietnam.

An online testimony attests to a husband's experience regarding the medical care his Vietnamese wife and newborn child received in Vietnam.

> I would not recommend any couple to have a child born here if it is possible. […] I decided to let my wife select the hospital as well as the doctor she felt most comfortable with. She […] selected the International Hospital for Women located in Ho Chi Minh City, Q1. Having that word "International" gave me a little of an assurance. However this assurance was abruptly snatched away as soon as we had our first prenatal visit. [Par. …] My wife at that time was 38 years old. I would think they would have done more testing to determine if the child may have Downs Syndrome, since at her age there is a 1:240 chance of our baby being affected. The only test that was done on her during her entire pregnancy was a blood test on her first check up. I had requested other tests [… but] those tests typically done to women at the age of my wife, are not conducted in Vietnam. [… Par. …] At nine months and our baby girl was in the breach state and no signs of turning. A cesarean had to be performed. We reserved the best room in the hospital [… but upon arriving] I felt like I took a step back in time. […] But, you have to make due with the cards you are dealt with. One good thing though, is that the nurses were of great help and pleasant. [… Par. …] Okay, so […] my wife […] undergoes her cesarean […] and finally our new baby girl is brought out. [She had t]en toes, ten fingers, […] and no deformities. Great, I was relieved. I asked about my wife and they said she is okay and is in the recovery room [so] I went back to work [but] I got a call that they needed me back right away. […] I found out that they could not stop her bleeding and they wanted consent to do a partial hysterectomy on her. But by the time I got to the hospital they already reopened and removed part of her uterus to stop the bleeding. If they had waited for me to sign, she would have died. The main thing is that my wife is okay. (ExpatExchange, 2011)

It is unclear based on that story whether the birthing complications of the mother (a Vietnamese woman) could have been avoided if it had been for alternative arrangements and 'better' health care. Certainly such outcomes may also happen in the Western world. However, from the vantage point of the husband, the pregnancy follow-ups and hospital infrastructure fell below his expectations. In response to his blog entry, another expatriate expressed a more positive outlook, providing good advise that reiterate the importance of social capital.

> As a foreign woman (Canadian) who has given birth to two children in Vietnam, I have to say I completely agree with the report on this particular hospital. I gave birth twice, by cesarean […], at a Vietnamese hospital, and while the recovery rooms are not beautiful, they were clean and functional. The nurses were great, and my doctor was wonderful. I chose the hospital based on the relationship I had built with my doctor. So I would say that, if you are pregnant in Vietnam, find a doctor you can trust and who listens to you, and then follow them to their hospital. (ExpatExchange, 2011)

In the case of the father however, it is his experience of Vietnamese pediatric care that became the decisive factor in his choice to leave Vietnam after 8 years of residency:

> A month has passed and it is time for our girl's first check up. […] When we finally saw the doctor, […] I was thinking, "Hey buddy are you going to wash your hands before you touch the baby?" He never did. Usually the pediatricians use a special flashlight with a cone to look into the ears, nose and throat. This guy used a regular flashlight just like from K-mart. What the hell??? He does not take off the clothes to check the baby, nor look at the body and limbs....Okay.....next person. [Par.] The hell with this, I have to find a new hospital. I […] found a French Vietnamese Hospital. On the second month we saw a pediatrician from France. I watched him, he washes his hands, removes all the clothes from our girl, inspects the whole body, ask us questions about diet and health. I thought this is great. This is a good hospital. I only wish I had found this earlier. The third month same doctor, same procedure...great, I was very happy. [Par.] The fourth month, our doctor left. But there was a new pediatrician from France. She was excellent also, no complaints. [Par.] The fifth month, another new French doctor? What the hell is going on? No problem, he was also good. [Par.]

> The sixth month no French doctors. But there were three Vietnamese doctors. I thought, okay I will try them. Dammm [sic]....don't they teach sanitation in Vietnam. Wash your hands first, any elementary school person knows that. That is why you have a sink behind you. […] Also, the way they checked the child was terrible and lazy. No questions about diet or health. [Par.] After this episode, I said hell with this, it is time to leave Vietnam. I cannot raise a child like this. Eight years is enough. So I started on my wife's visa papers to get our family to the states. (ExpatExchange, 2011)

The experiences of this expatriate exemplify how difficult situation are perceived with greater severity when the welfare of the child is at stakes, so much so, that expatriates may be inclined to leave Vietnam in order to meet their parenting expectations. Service and safety standards in Vietnam often fall below Western standard expectations, even in institutions that are deemed 'international'. It is in this context that tolerating and accepting 'different norms' may be difficult for anxious parents who hold on, uncompromisingly, to their Western expectations.

In fact, part of the mechanism expatriates adopts in their critique of local 'inadequacies' often falls in line with a neo-colonial disposition, highlighting the backwardness of practices and the apparent common sense of the right way of doing things –based on the internalization of Western conventions. While there are plenty of incompetent doctors in the Western world, expatriates may fall in the trap of generalizing perceptions, in this case as per the seeming ineptitude of the Other, by comparison to an imagined 'exemplary Western model'. Deep introjections surrounding what good health care entails, along with an intense desire to raise 'a healthy child' are compounded to accumulated frustrations caused by a series of bad experiences. As in this case, being

confronted with seemingly ‘grave’ and ‘consistent’ service inadequacies may well prompt expatriates to contemplate repatriation as a solution.

When compared to other cultures, especially Western cultures, Vietnamese institutional conventions, infrastructures and structural/cultural conditions differ in many respects, and the experiences of expatriate parents reflect forms of cross-cultural encounters that may confront Western cultural doxa, such as in the case of healthcare, educational or public safety standards. To be clear,

> Doxa as a ‘misrecognition’ established through tacit consensus is a process in which ‘analogical reproduction’ and ‘mimetic representation’ leads to the formation and perpetuation of the ‘taken-for-grantedness’ of the ‘objective’ world. Doxa flows from a practical sense that is established in the relation between habitus and structure to which it is attuned (Bourdieu, 1990: 68). Bourdieu explains that doxa is only foregrounded and made explicit through the interrelation of divergent, novel or competing discourses and practices. He feels that this is most often found in the context of culture contact or with political and economic crises ([Bourdieu] 1977: 168). (Throop & Murphy, 2002: 189)

Therefore what Western expatriate parents take for granted in terms of health care standards, educational principles, or civil order, is likely to come under fire as they gain exposure to local structural and cultural conditions.

Parental health and safety concerns are also modulated by a child’s life stage, whereby newborns, toddlers, school age children and teenagers will have particular needs and face new or different risks as they grow up. An informal conversation I had with an expatriate mother (Abbie) about her teenage daughter (recorded through observant participation) brought to light the challenge of managing her teen daughter’s growing desire for freedom and independence. Abbie’s eldest daughter, at 16, almost 17, was starting to go out to coffee shops and bars in downtown Hanoi, meeting various friends

on location. Her parents allowed it, namely as a compromise because 'back home' she would have been allowed to drive by then. In Vietnam, because traffic is too dangerous, the trade off was allowing her more freedom, as long as she used the family driver or reputable taxi companies. Clear rules were established in order to keep her safe, but it dawned on her parents that, as a pretty white teenager, she may be at greater risk. Abbie knew, like Pamela, a survey respondent, that "[d]rugs, alcohol and prostitution are all readily available on the streets and cheap, so teenagers need to be aware of the dangers." Expatriate children, as they grow up into teens and young adults, widen the range of fields they navigate on their own. So the challenges faced by expatriate parents with younger children differ significantly from the challenges facing expat parents with teenagers. For the latter, the issue of hazardous urban conditions, involving city traffic, the susceptibility of foreigners to theft (sometimes violent robberies), along with the proliferation of drugs, alcohol and prostitution is much more relevant and taps into visceral parental fears that are not uncommon, even in developed countries. The difference however, is that local law enforcement in Vietnam is particularly slack and if anything were to happen, local authorities would likely be inefficient in their intervention. Expatriate parents know their teenagers can easily enter bars and consume alcohol as they please, as proof of age is never required at the door. Moreover, there have been reported cases involving expats' whose drinks had been spiked with drugs. In the case of Abbie, the remedy to her parental anxieties consisted in a carefully thought-out approach involving clear rules and an explicit compromise to which her daughter conceded.

While the structures of feeling of parents are modulated by the life stage of children, local conditions also have a fundamental influence on the experience of children, and therefore on the concerns of expat parents. Beyond parental health and safety concerns, which are contingent on the age of children, other anxieties may emerge as a result of social conditions affecting public life in general. In such cases, such conditions may even contribute to a child's isolation and exclusion, and parents may in turn perceive Vietnam as a hostile environment for their family. In one particular case, during a participant observation session involving an informal conversation at an 'after-school' expat parent hangout spot (a children-friendly restaurant-lounge) in Hanoi, one mother confided that her adopted child (of African origin) was experiencing "difficulties in school, [in] making friends especially." In Vietnam, whiteness is privileged as a marker of status, but also as esthetic criteria for beauty. As such, the child came home, on a number of occasions, crying after getting picked on.

> Kailey [North American, middle age]: I am thinking about applying for [another position overseas] because [my child] is experiencing racism at school. This past year has been really hard [… and] I'm seriously worried about racist bullying by the Vietnamese children and even some of the Vietnamese staff. […] I never imagined people could be so cruel to a child just because of skin color! [Pause – voice denotes frustration] 'Arh!' it makes me really angry! [Pause –with angrier tone] How can anyone call a child ugly to his face?

This respondent expresses legitimate parental concerns about her black child's marginalization. Coming from the West where multiculturalism is almost taken for granted, she did not anticipate that racist attitudes would be so pronounced in Vietnam. Yet, despite the fact that racism is still common in the West, in Vietnam the social position of the child, by virtue of his/her skin color, is one of extreme vulnerability to

racial prejudice and to the alienating construction of whiteness (Vs darkness/blackness). The mother's subjective experience is, by proxy, enmeshed in her child's defenselessness towards such local social conditions, and her own disposition as protector. As such, her anxiety is translated into the urge to leave the country to shield her child from racist stigmatization. Obviously racial/ethnic and skin color differentiation merits a more in-depth discussion, notably as it pertains to the implications and cultural politics of whiteness (fairness) and blackness (darkness) in Vietnamese society. Though the point here is that this expat mother expressed acute frustrations and fears related to her child's marginalization, denoting an angst that is specific to a parent's habitus. This example, although out of the norm, only reiterates the importance of subjectivity, in an analysis of expatriates' experiences, including those of expat parents. In fact, on top of negotiating their own social position and incumbent struggles in different fields of practice, expat parents are also bound to their dispositions as fathers/mothers, thereby experiencing stressors that are in line with the specific challenges that their children face in the receiving context.

Another example, which resonates with most expatriates in Vietnam, especially parents, revolves around road safety.[191] Most expatriates in Vietnam understand the severity and perils of traffic in major Vietnamese cities, having experienced accidents,

[191] Traffic accident statistics produced by the General Statistical Office of Vietnam report "12,800 cases of traffic accident [for 2008], killing 11,600 persons and injuring 8,100 others. […] On average, each day in 2008, the country had 35 cases of [reported] traffic accident, killing 32 persons and injuring 22 others. Compared to 2007, cases of traffic accident per day went down by 5, the death down by 4 and the injured by 7" (GSO, 2009)

leading in some cases to major injuries or even death.[192] Traffic in Vietnam's major cities is overwhelmingly chaotic and seemingly 'more dangerous' than in most Western societies, namely due to a general disrespect for, or lack of awareness of, formal road safety principles and a completely 'different' driving culture.

> Like HCM City, Vietnam's economic capital, Hanoi is a densely populated environment with a prolonged "rush hour" during which virtually every square meter of road is occupied by a vehicle of some sort, mostly motorbikes, all trying to make their way to work, home, or wherever, as quickly as possible. (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005: 23)

Imagine an endless stream of motorcyclists/scooterists, a growing number of cars, and numerous buses and trucks spewing black smoke, intent on not breaking their stride. While pedestrians have little choice to cross wherever and whenever they can because crosswalk points are rare, motorists drive around pedestrians, cyclists and other obstacles like a school of fish would avoid an obstacle. Lane discipline is inexistent, driving the wrong way in one-way street is not unusual, and it is not uncommon for motorcycle drivers to take over the sidewalk or the incoming-traffic lane to get around a rush-hour jam or pass slower drivers in their lane.[193]

However, for expat parents, experiencing a road accident that also involves their child, may well be a catalyst for intense stress and anxiety, and seriously irrational

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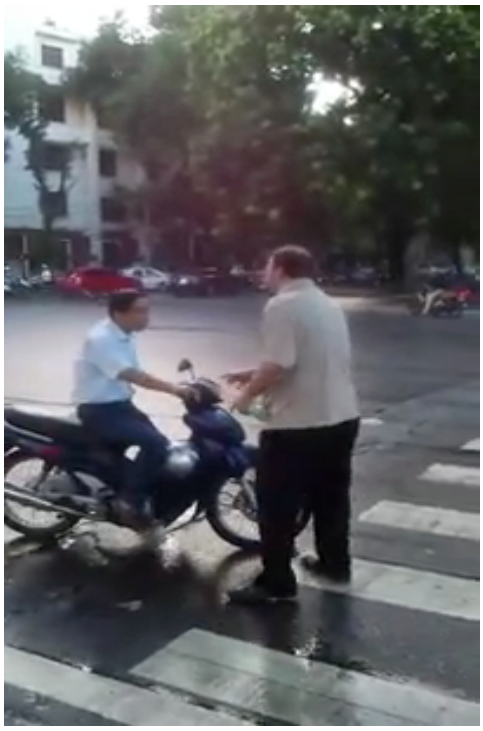
[192] On N=254 responses to the questions "What are the main challenges you experience in your personal/family life and through your work in Vietnam?" 6.3% of respondents mentioned having health or safety related worries, 5.1% reported being stressed as one of their main concern, 14.2% reported that traffic is a major "headache" and "source of stress" (This represents 12% of all respondents [N = 300] and 3.5% reported having been involved in at least one road/traffic accident.

[193] In 2004, speeding and irregular passing were respectively responsible for 34% and 22% of road traffic accidents according to a team of researchers affiliated to the University of Transport and Communication in Hanoi, and Vietnam's Ministry of Transport. Furthermore, drunk driving is rampant, being associated to 11% of traffic accidents in 2004. (Trinh Thuy & Nguyen Xuan, 2005: 1925) One respondent explicitly complained about "the smell of alcohol on the breath of xe om [motorbike taxi] drivers," confirming the risk, even when expatriates choose not to drive.

behavior as a response to anger and powerlessness. In one particular case, an expat father took to the street to regulate traffic on his own, after he and his daughter got hit by a motorcyclist going the wrong way on a busy boulevard lane. "This morning, when I took my child to school, a motorist traveling the wrong way crashed into my motorcycle. I have reported the traffic hazards here to local authorities several times but they never give me feedback, forcing me to stand here and regulate traffic […]." (Tuoi Tre News, 2012) With the involvement of his child, this expat channeled his anxiety into action; and to compensate for his powerlessness, decided to intervene, however inappropriate, useless and hopeless in the end. His intervention is not rational, rather, he is acting out as a result of an intense emotional motivations and in the moment, he doesn't think or care about the fact that his intervention will do little to substantially affect or change the flow of traffic in Hanoi or at that specific intersection.

This expatriate's subjective position as a father is central to his reaction. He personalized this experience, as a father infuriated by the recklessness of motorists, who put him and his daughter at risk of injury, and by the subsequent lack of response by law enforcement, but also as a foreigner with a different 'vision' of how things should/ought to be in terms of road safety. In fact, this is another example where Western doxa is profoundly confronted by local ways, engendering a state of angst, which is rooted in cultural dispositions, at the intersection of parenting and civil habituses. While this expat may have experienced unease and frustration about the traffic situation in the past, it is his parental anxieties following his and his daughter's earlier accident that serve as impetus for his reaction.



VIDEO 1 -. *Expat regulating traffic in Hanoi*
Reproduced with Permission
Source: Tuoi Tre News, 2012

Indeed, the traffic situation is perceived as chaotic from the point of view of the Western habitus, and though there are many expats who learn to brave the roads on their motorbikes, expat parents for their part, may find such urban conditions particularly daunting if their child's safety is at risk. An informal discussion I had with an expatriate also corroborated this point of view (recorded through participant observation)

> Damian [North American, middle age man]: I deal with traffic everyday on my way to work; I see how crazy it is. I told my [Vietnamese] wife that I don't want her to take [… our child] with her when she rides her motorbike. She can take a taxi. We can afford it; it's not a problem. […] But she completely ignores my demand and keeps on doing it. It's like she doesn't see the risk!

Damian drives a motorbike in the city, though he is unwilling to put his child at risk. He expresses strong reservations about the fact that his wife does not conceive of the risk in the same way, thereby refusing to concede to his request. This confirms that having dependent children changes the equation for expatriates, whereby a practice that is acceptable for a parent, may be perceived as too great of a risk for his/her child. Meanwhile, the social and infrastructural conditions of developing countries, when

perceived through a Western cross-cultural lens, can be conceived as hazardous, inadequate, and backwards, denoting a dissonance in the 'risk assessments' that Westerners and Vietnamese nationals make in their everyday practices.

Finally, after experiencing Vietnam at different stages of his adult life, Jake, another survey respondent, came to the conclusion that Vietnam is not an ideal setting to raise a family. Jake explains:

> Jake: quality of life is not high enough if you have a family. [… M]edical care in particular is totally deficient, the education is weak and there are not enough quality extracurricular activities [… T]hese points were not such an issue when young, but as you get older and with a family you realize there are better places for a family to be raised.

Jake's point is that concerns over 'what is important', notably in terms of living standard expectations, will change over time, notably with the welfare of a family in mind.

Parenting, because it is rooted in habitus, because it modulates an expatriates' social position, and because it determines patterns of practice in various fields, has a pivotal influence on the adjustment of expatriates as they settle, live and work abroad. While concessions and compromises allow expatriate parents to deal with the shortcomings of local infrastructural, structural and cultural conditions, experiences entailing various degrees of 'shock' can be brought on by traumatic incidents involving their children. An analysis of expatriate parenting priorities/anxieties reveal that respondents with dependent children were truly invested in their 'caring role', which also brought to the fore the subjective experiences of children, as these are perceived by expatriate parents. Indeed, children are part of a cohort of expatriates that is often neglected in the scholarship on migration, notably with a view to their cross-cultural

adjustment. However within the frame of this research, what emerges more saliently is the disposition of expatriate parents to take seriously the conditions that may promote or impede the wellbeing and development of their children. While there is increased evidence that the adjustment of an accompanying expatriate spouse has an effect on the other expatriate in the couple, there is a paucity of research on the effect of expatriate children adjustment and experiences overseas on expatriate parents. According to the examples provided here, evidence suggest that parenting anxieties should be considered as important contingency factors in the subjective experience of expatriates, especially those who live and care for dependent children. The very nature of the challenges an expatriate is likely to experience as a foreigner in Vietnam, changes and intensifies as a corollary of parental anxieties.

As mentioned previously, the theoretical premise that ties the subjective experiences of expatriate parents together is that the emotional or affective schematics of parenting is bound to affect their experience overseas, notably where and when they may be willing/able to compromise, or make concessions regarding the 'care' they provide to their children, and in terms of their patterns of practice. Expatriate parents are likely to compare local conditions to those they are familiar with in their homeland, and as such they may judge local amenities and services as 'substandard'. Of course healthcare and education are key fields of practice/relations where expatriates' expectations as parents are at play, though general concerns related to safety seem to be pervasive. The internalization of more stringent criteria and standards concerning quality health care and safety standards are bound to the Western cultural habitus, which interact or overlaps

with other dimensions of habitus, including class-based, gendered and parental dispositions. It is in this sense that structures of feeling must be taken into account in relation to the specific roles and dispositions of social actors, in order to render their personal and subjective experiences more comprehensively.

6.4-. Parenting, expat-Vietnamese encounters and the negotiation of Western doxa

The subjective experiences of expatriate parents are bound to their cultural habitus, which affects their values, preferences and practices, and therefore the ways in which they choose to raise their kids. To various degrees, expatriate parents are compelled to educate their children in line with the Western values and ways of life that they adhere to, while also appreciating their exposure to other 'foreign' cultures. However, this attachment to Western values and middle upper class living standards is apparent in the norms they set at home, in daily practices, in their choice of school, and especially, in their efforts to impart their methods and ideas to the nannies that take care of their progeny. Some expat parents' narratives clearly reflect attitudes that are laden in Western expectations and modes of interaction, thereby confirming the durable nature of habitus.

Interview narratives and focus group exchanges revealed how expat parents' practices and cross-cultural relations tend to be modulated by deep-seated Western preferences and sensibilities, and how symbolic value is associated to Western cultural capital.

> Rose [white North American, middle age]: […] Within the first year and a half, I think I must have interviewed, over 30 nannies, … huh, ok maybe

> I'm exaggerating… maybe 20, [laugh] I hired 5, [laugh] one at a time of course [laugh], fired 4, and finally I think I have the right one now. [… I can deal with a] medium level [of] English but I [… get] really annoyed at hearing 'yes madam, yes madam' then realizing they didn't understand a word I said.

Rose's input highlights how difficult it was for her to find the right nanny based on her stringent criteria, and her irritation vis-à-vis the lack of forthcomingness and directness of her employees, who are keen to agree without understanding completely, as a sign of respect. Of course this leads to cross-cultural misunderstandings, though this practice is deeply entrenched in traditional class dynamics, and Westerners may not understand that Vietnamese are socialized to respond to authority in ways that are non-confrontational. Alternatively, Westerners are often inattentive to body language, which is more likely to provide clues as to whether or not a message is understood.

With regards to child care, a host of cross-cultural differences are bound to surface, and expatriate parents often require their children's nannies to adjust their child caring practices in line with Western ways, a process that is akin to forms of acculturation. One interview respondent described her experience emphasizing her Western expectations and some of the cross-cultural adjustments she was asking her child's nanny to make:

> Fay [white Australian, late thirties]: After witnessing the childcare methods of our babysitter, I decided to stay home with her to show her what I expected. She was nice and [our toddler] seemed to like her, but some of her ways were just ridiculous. I couldn't believe what I was seeing sometimes … like when I noticed she tried to feed [him/her] while chasing [the child] around the house… [laugh, lowers head in hand momentarily] 'No, you sit the child down in the high chair and you teach [him/her] how to use utensils' […] I had to insist on this 'no more running around the house with food' 'no more chasing [the child] when it's time to eat'. [laugh …]

> Interviewer: [laugh] Do you have other examples? Were there other difficulties related to cultural differences?
> Fay: Oh many,… I had to tell her not to hesitate to use and change [his/her] diapers, anytime, … I mean when necessary. I prefer a soiled diaper than a soiled mattress, couch or floor. […] generally people are poor, [… so] diapers are used to the minimum here… it's common for people to hold their child over open sewers in the street, so they can urinate or defecate there. It's actually quite disturbing … unhygienic I'd say […]. One time, I was home with the babysitter and she noticed that [my child] was bending over, about to do his business… so she grabbed [him/her], rushed to the bathroom to try to put [him/her] on the potty and 'save' the diaper from getting soiled, by that time [my baby] is crying … she got the diaper off, but didn't have time to put [the child] on the potty, so most of the urinating took place on the floor until [the child] started pooping, she couldn't make it to the potty without stepping in urine so she decided to use the garbage as a receptacle [laugh … pause] it was the closest thing available, I guess… [Cynical sigh] I was standing in the doorway watching this as it happened… Ridiculous [laugh] it was like a comedy [show]… we laughed about it together afterward, and I told her 'there will be no more trying to save the diaper' [laugh]. Potty training will come in time. […]

Fay identifies marked cross-cultural differences between her way of caring for her toddler and the approach of the Vietnamese nanny. What is most important though, is her perception of the 'ridiculousness' of some of the nanny's ways of doing things and of the 'disturbing and unhygienic' practices of Vietnamese parents, her unwillingness to compromise on what she believed to be 'appropriate' methods, and the effort she invested in clarifying her expectations to her childcare attendant. Parents are often uncompromising when it comes to the care of their children and they are guided by cultural constructs, preferences, beliefs and convictions that guide their parenting practices as well as their judgment of 'foreign ways of doing tings'. This is in part due to deep introjections about the 'right way' to raise children from their own cultural point of view, which also intersect with race/ethnicity, class, gender, education level, etc.

From Fay's subjective standpoint, the importance of sitting her child in that high chair at meal time, teaching him/her to use utensils (rather than being spoon-fed while playing), and using diapers until the toddler is ready to switch to the potty (rather than rushing potty training in order to save on diapers), all reflect her attachment to Western ideas about how children should be raised. This is, not withstanding her economic means, which allow her to consider the prolonged and constant use of diapers as a viable option, until her child demonstrates the will to potty train. The fact that potty training is not a priority stems in part from Fay's social position as an upper class foreigner in Vietnam, and the underlying notion that for her the cost of diapers is not perceived as a significant economic burden –compared to 'poorer Vietnamese' as she explains in her narrative. The experience of many expatriate parents, including the way they 'interpret' cross-cultural differences in childcare practices, the way they are invested in reproducing Western practices abroad, notably in the upbringing of their children, but also in the way they perceive, contend and respond to family needs, are contingent on key dimensions of habitus, internalized forms of doxa, and relative social position. Class and cultural distinctions are thus equally engaged in the process of child rearing.[194] There is therefore an overlap between cultural, class, gender and parenting habituses, which in turn affects the practices of expatriate parents. Although it is critical to identify the practices

[194] "Recent research has identified social class and childrearing experience as key sources of within-culture variation in parenting (Boushel, 2000; Cheung & Nguyen, 2001; Harkness & Super, 1996; McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 1992)." (Wise & Da Silva, 2007) However, between cultures, clear differences in dominant parenting practices can also be identified. "Harkness and Super (1992) developed the term 'parental ethnotheories' to help explain cultural differences in parenting. Ethnotheories are collective beliefs held by a cultural group about children's development and behaviour, and include expectations about the cognitive, social and emotional development of children (Rosenthal & Roer-Strier, 2001). They derive from parents' cultural experiences within their community or reference group, and reflect cultural beliefs about children's development and characteristics of children that are valued by [a society of reference…] (Harkness & Super, 1992; Rosenthal & Roer-Strier, 2001)." (Wise & Da Silva, 2007: 2)

described above, as contributing to forms of boundary maintenance, not only between expatriate families and host country nationals that work for them as nannies, but also between such expatriate families and Vietnamese people more generally, because they imply more than just a class and cultural distinction, they symbolize convictions about the 'civilized way' to raise children.

Another interview respondent had experiences that were similar to Fay's, confirming the recurrence of particular practices, which highlight cross-cultural dissonance in childrearing. Adam recounted that his wife had "the brilliant idea to bring the old nanny cam" to Vietnam. In principle, the 'nanny cam' is a video camera that is hidden in a stuffed animal or teddy bear. It is commonly used in America, notably by parents who wish to monitor childcare attendants and children, while they are outside the home. The use of the nanny cam may also represent the manifestation of parental anxieties and fears, which are exacerbated by a dependence on a 'stranger', let alone a 'foreign stranger' to care for a dependent child; and the need to control how children are being treated by caretakers, or how they behave when parents are gone. To their surprise, they discovered that

> Adam [white North American, middle age]: when it was time to eat lunch […the nanny] followed [our child around] with a bowl and a spoon, trying to make [him/her] eat 'on the go'. So we had a chat with her and insisted that she sit [him/her] down at the table for the whole meal. […] Back home, we sit at the table to eat, right up to desert, and children, even adults, ask to be excused if they want to leave the table. [Pause] It seems to me that these are basic table manners […]. We eventually invited her [the nanny] to join us for a few meals to see how we do things. […] After that there was improvement […].

Adam describes the same practice that Fay also witnessed, though Fay and Adam are completely unrelated. What he calls basic table manners are in fact part and parcel of his doxa, or those 'taken for granted' norms, which correspond to the attitudes that he assumes constitute proper conduct and which, according to him, should be inculcated to children as part of a Western middle-upper class socialization process. Indeed,

> [C]ulturally embedded beliefs and expectations are thought to give shape to [..] childrearing practices […]. [Notably, c]ross-cultural differences are also recognized in a number of different aspects of feeding practices, with some parents encouraging independent feeding and others preferring to directly feed their children (see, for example, Harwood, Scoelmerich, Schulze, & Gonzalez, 1999). (Wise & Da Silva, 2007: 2)

Part of the issue is perhaps that 'Western table manners' do not correspond to dominant local norms and cannot be taken for granted in Vietnam. Many Vietnamese families, even within the middle-upper classes, eat on straw mats that are laid out on the floor. In fact, in downtown Hanoi, on Hang Bo Street, local eateries that are open in the evenings (after most local shops have closed) literally spread straw mats on the sidewalk, and locals sit cross-legged in circles, sharing food casually with family and friends. In this context, small children are cradled on the legs of their mothers and fed, at least until they get the urge to wiggle their way out of that position. Therefore the use of high chairs is not common in Vietnamese households or even restaurants.

Adam qualified his experience as "eye opening" because he did not realize how strict he was about table manners until he saw the nanny let the child continue playing while she fed him/her. He took these for granted and did not anticipate having to clarify his expectations on this issue. He realized that on some level, his household upheld a form of decorum (table manners, politeness –saying please and thank you- among others)

that Vietnamese, especially domestic staff representing lower classes, were unfamiliar with. He was also careful to clarify which forms of discipline he endorsed, which is important in dealing with caretakers from any culture, but especially when expatriate parents are unfamiliar with the local culture. For Adam, who is part of a dual-career couple, it is difficult to have to rely on others to care for his kids, particularly after a move overseas. From this point of view, Adam's subjective experience reflects anxieties that are born of his cultural, spousal, parental and professional dispositions, and of his relative position as a privileged expatriate in Vietnam, as a husband, as a co-bread winner, as a father, and as a member of a professional upper class.

For Adam and his wife, the importance of raising their children according to their own cultural frame of reference was crucial, which explains why they asked their nanny to attend a few of their conventional family dinners. This served as a strategy to teach the nanny their way of doing things, and an effective tactic to clarify their expectations regarding table manners. There were "growing pains" as Adam put it:

> Adam: At first it was quite difficult to set ground rules [with the nanny]. We told her we will not accept hitting [… instead] we use the quiet time or naughty chair methods. […] We like that she is very joyful and affectionate with [the children, … though] she had a hard time disciplining [our youngest …] at first. […] It was chaos sometimes! […]

Though in time, their children's nanny became an invaluable part of the family. Adam expressed appreciation about the fact that his kids had the opportunity to be exposed to the Vietnamese culture in general, though he adamantly expressed his wish to socialize his children according to his own cultural frame of reference. According to him: "in the long run, I want them to feel comfortable when we go back home for visits or when we

will move back." In fact, research has shown that parents' childrearing practices and expectations are generally consistent with the standards, which hold prominence in their culture of reference. (Harwood et al., 1999) With this in mind, it is clear that Adam expresses a strong commitment to raising his children in a way that reflects his cultural upbringing and related values, not only because these are internalized as 'common sense', 'morally right' and 'socially appropriate', but at least in part to pass on forms of cultural capital that will allow his children to fit-in, and feel they belong to, their parents' culture of origin.

After visiting Vietnamese friends/colleagues in their family homes, Adam was exposed to local cultural norms and what he perceived as 'typical' Vietnamese family practices. As such, he identified cross-cultural differences and interpreted his observations as such: the Vietnamese way is "more loose inside the home and tighter outside the home." Indeed, in Vietnamese culture there is an expectation that children are responsible for upholding the dignity of their family; therefore public conduct at school or in social settings must be exemplary, especially around adults because a profound respect for parents and elders is inculcated at a very young age. But at the same time, at home or amongst family and friends, or with peers, Vietnamese children, especially boys, are often left to their own devices to play, make a mess, be noisy, and rambunctious. Meanwhile stereotypical constructs of Vietnamese mothers pin them as "the embodiment of love and [according to] the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice." (Huynh Dinh Te, [no date])

Education is also a key area of concern for expat parents. In this field, demonstrating adherence to stringent criteria and underlying Western expectations, Melinda, another focus group respondent, describes her concerns in her initial attempt to find a good school for her eldest child.

> Melinda [European, mid-thirties]: I think I was lucky, [smile] I found a good playschool through a referral and that was it [for the youngest…]. The priority for us was choosing a school for [our eldest one …]. We learned a lot the first few months. Dear Lord! [laugh] The more schools I visited the more criteria I had on my list. Does the school have a nurse? […] Can the school accommodate food allergies? Is the schoolyard safe? What is the program and is it equivalent to British standards? Are there extra-curricular activities? What are the school's fees? Is there a uniform? How many students are there per class usually? My list of questions was growing as I went along! [laugh …]

Melinda conceded that some of her expectations had to be revisited and adjusted in light of local norms and conditions, although she was uncompromising in ensuring educational programs were guided by a Western curriculum that was internationally recognized. Again the importance of an educational approach/curriculum that imparts Western cultural capital was crucial in Melinda's choice of school for her child, notably because she was thinking of her children's future, and of the post secondary and professional opportunities that open-up with a recognized Western education.

In public settings, particular situations can also confront expat parents to cross-cultural differences, spurring intense anxieties and discomfort for some fathers/mothers who are not familiar with Vietnamese culture. As Gabriela [a survey respondent] complained:

> Gabriela (Northern European): I have a baby that has blond hair blue eyes. In my culture you don't always touch it [the baby]. This is inappropriate. Here they always touch while I try to understand I find it very difficult.

Part of the problem underscoring Gabriela's subjective experience stems from the configuration of her social expectations, notably her tendency to prefer discretion and privacy. Again, it is a matter of doxa, the taken-for-granted norms that delineate 'personal space' in public settings. The cross-cultural conflict therefore is born of two intersecting disposition: her own civil disposition towards private space, which modulates her preference and expectation to be left alone, and the un-inhibited rapport that many Vietnamese adults have towards children. A long-term expatriate explains the Vietnamese perspective in contrast to Western expectations:

> You won't really understand how much Vietnamese people love babies until you get there. [Par.] You have a cute baby, you're used to people smiling at the baby, maybe bending down to talk to him/her. That's at home, and it's not everyone, just a few people per outing. But in Vietnam, expect just about everyone to react to the baby. Faces will light up, people will start to crowd you, people will clap their hands in front of the baby's face, pinch cheeks and thighs and pat heads. It can be overwhelming. [Par.] If you are in a hurry, just smile and keep walking. If the baby is afraid, just smile and keep walking. If you have time and the baby thinks this is how life should be, just enjoy it. Let the waitress parade the baby around the restaurant, let the xe om (motorbike taxi) driver play with the baby on the motorbike […]. [Par] I was initially concerned about how waitresses would take Miss M away from me. But, after being repeatedly reassured that no one planned to steal the baby, I learned to enjoy having a bit of time to eat with no one on my lap, using both hands! People may give the baby food. It should be OK, even if lollies [sic] before dinner isn't your idea of entree. Young children, especially light-haired children, will get similar treatment. (The Dropout Diaries, 2011)

The above-mentioned cross-cultural differences in the configuration of behaviors surrounding the rapport between adults and children are not founded on the fact that Vietnamese people 'love babies' more than Western people do; but rather that Westerners are rather used to, and often take for granted, the fact that personal space, interpersonal

discretion and the principle of privacy influence public interactions, thus mitigating how people react to babies in public. Being intrusive, even for a cute baby, in the way that is described above is particularly frowned upon in most of the Western world.

Normative Western parenting conventions are informed by a certain constructs and internalized disposition towards the assessment of 'risks' related to health and safety. Westerners in general are socialized to be weary of, and therefore maintain a relative distance towards strangers. It is that same disposition, which tells us that teaching kids not to talk to strangers makes sense. Indeed deep-seated disposition, symptomatic of the Western habitus, condition our reactions in the face of those strangers who tend to get too close to our children. Moreover, Western cultures effectively promote and reproduce personal/social aversions to germs. So parents in the West usually are more reluctant to let unrelated persons touch their babies, partly as a sanitary (hygienic) precaution. Again, this is related to a disposition towards perceived risks related to the health and safety of the child, one that is inculcated and internalized as normative standards for 'good parenting' in the West. In turn, seeing a crowd of Vietnamese people form around your baby and watching so many strangers taking the liberty to handle him/her without asking first, can be perceived as extremely invasive. This awkward situation extends from cross-cultural differences, which generate annoyance and unease from Gabriela's subjective point of view. Pervasive cross-cultural differences in parenting practices and in adult-child relationship may be difficult to get used to for expatriate parents who are unfamiliar

with local ways of doing things.[195] In fact, at home with a nanny, or in choosing a particular school or nursery, expatriate parents can usually maintain a degree of control over the way their children are treated, while in unfamiliar public setting, cross-cultural differences may engender less predictable and controllable situations.

Expat parents, especially those with dependent children, face hurdles that expatriates without children may not face. They feel worries that are exacerbated by their parental dispositions and they are exposed to cross-cultural differences, which have implications on their sensibilities as fathers/mothers. Despite the subjective and personalized experience of expat parents, many of their parenting practices contribute to transnational cultural reproduction. In fact, narratives reveal that in many cases, in spite of exposure to local cultural norms and an appreciation for cultural differences, expatriates' attachment to Western childcare conventions is bound by constructs, ideas, assumptions and values that are deeply internalized as part of habitus, notably in terms of the basic markers of class and cultural membership. As such, adaptive practices that coincide with parenting practices (especially in the home) are often geared towards habitus accommodation and the maintenance of doxa.

[195] Researchers from the Australian Institute of Family Studies, identified key differences between the parenting practices and expectations of Anglo-carers/parents and those of Vietnamese and Somalian carers/parents. "The Vietnamese and Somali cultural groups were chosen because they represent cultures that were likely to reflect 'non-Western' childrearing values and beliefs." (Wise & Da Silva, 2007) According to this report, and compared to Anglo-carers/parents, Vietnamese carers/parents tend to value 'child compliance' more than 'child independence' among other notable cross-cultural differences. In fact, this research substantiate a number of findings about cross-cultural differences, notably in the establishment of parenting goals, in disciplinary philosophy, and in expectations about child development, particularly as these differ between 'individualistic' and 'collectivist' societies. (See also Chao, 1995, Harwood et al., 1999). This is not a matter of 'culture clash' per say, but rather an acknowledgement of cross-cultural differences that are likely to be reproduced in child-rearing and child-caring practices, thereby incurring possible cross-cultural tensions in the interaction between parents from one culture and childcare attendants from another culture.

6.5-. Conclusions

Expatriates' household and child rearing practices are fundamentally influenced by class, status and cultural markers of differentiation that are likely to intersect with other factors of distinction such as gender, marital/relationship status, family arrangement, professional/occupational position, race/ethnicity, among other. These differences and the constructs that reify their (cross-)cultural relevance modulate complex negotiations involving relative/situational positionality and dispositional propensities. In turn, these differences may have direct and indirect effects on practices, which sometimes also serve as forms of boundary maintenance between some expats and certain categories of host country nationals. In highlighting power dynamics and inequalities, along with their historical precedents, it seems that the enduring character of habitus may also entail a tendency to reproduce old patterns of domination and revealing forms of cross-cultural dissonance born of doxa.

Expat reliance on domestic help in various fields of practice (childcare, housekeeping, public errands, pool and garden maintenance, driving, etc.) can be conceived as 'neo-colonial (re)production' despite representing located adaptation strategies mean to enhance quality of life and satisfaction. The lack of familiarity with the receiving context and limitations on expatriates' access to social/cultural capital (as a result of transnational relocation –living far from family and friends) seem to impart relative disadvantages and consequential challenges related to childrearing and family bonding. However the benefits associated with class and status along with access to disposable income, allows expatriates to avoid a number of difficulties that would

normally come with 'being foreign' in Vietnam. On one hand, class and expatriates' privileged status in Vietnam provide them with the means to overcome a number of household maintenance and parenting challenges by employing domestic help in various forms, thereby alleviating stressors. On the other, it seems that Western expatriates' are particularly invested in reproducing elements of their national cultural heritages in their homemaking practices, and in accommodating Western expectations in their childrearing and caring practices. Respondent testimonies and ample observations revealed that many expatriate parents tend to reproduce familiar and comforting sets of practices, which are deeply internalized as part of habitus. Though narratives also suggest that cross-cultural differences and local structural conditions can cause significant parental anxieties, notably due to perceived dissonance between what expats deem appropriate, and local ways of doing/being/thinking. Expatriate parents, in defending/reproducing their favored educational approach in the face of dissonant Vietnamese 'ways' are in fact engage in the reification of their doxa, as they consciously or unconsciously negotiate household and parenting practice with host country nationals. Yet, because power and class relations between expatriate employers and Vietnamese domestic staff, substantiate uneven exchanges, Vietnamese nannies are not overtly in a position that would allow them to 'confront' their expatriate employers as to the legitimacy of other ways of doing things. The cross-cultural relations underscored here, thus recall one of Bourdieu's critical points: "The dominated classes have an interest in pushing back the limits of doxa and exposing the arbitrariness of the taken for granted; the dominant classes have an interest in defending the integrity of doxa or short of this, of establishing in its place the

necessarily imperfect substitute, *orthodoxy*."[196] (Bourdieu, 1977: 169 [Original emphasis]) As such, Western doxa legitimates an attachment to practices that are reproduced by many expatriates and expat parents, perhaps sometimes through a sense of orthodoxy (the perception of a right/wrong way of doing something), whether in the form of table manners, in the reaction to intrusive strangers, or in choosing a curricular program that meets 'international' standards. These reflect deeply held beliefs about the symbolic value of Western cultures, as well as class- and gender-based introjections that are enacted as modus operandi.

While expat parents may appreciate the cultural differences of host country nationals, they can also be relatively uncompromising, seeking to maintain a Western approach in much of the socialization of their children, at least insofar as family and household arrangements are concerned. In exogamous families involving a Vietnamese spouse and mixed children, greater cross-cultural compromises have to be negotiated at home, though expatriates are still inclined to maintain many of their standard Western expectations, especially in the field of household comforts/convenience, healthcare and education. In terms of theoretical advancement, I suggested that expatriates' parenting roles are fundamentally orientated by constitutive elements of habitus and doxa, which are then articulated in sets of practices and transposed as requirements in the socialization of their children. I also suggested that the manifestation of parenting habituses is inevitably colored by subjective structures of feelings that substantiate the claim that

[196] "Orthodoxy, straight or rather straightened, opinion, which aims, without ever entirely succeeding, at restoring the primal state of innocence of doxa, exists only in the objective relationship which opposes it to heterodoxy, that is, by reference to the choice – *hairesis*, heresy – made possible by the existence of *competing possibles* and to the explicit critique of the sum total of the alternatives not chosen that established order implies." (Bourdieu, 1977: 169 [original emphasis])

expat parents' adaptation imperatives may be felt as forms of anxieties. As such, subjective parental priorities and located angst can be seen as emerging from key dispositions that will modulate the deployment of adaptive practices.

The West and elements of 'Western cultures' are thus reproduced in the homes of many English-speaking expatriates in Vietnam, despite the fact that cross-cultural exposure entails a degree of awareness, which at a superficial level at least, provides insights into the culture and habituses of host-country nationals. In the framework of Bourdieu's theory of practice, social actors may reproduce practices that are bound by the standards and rules of a field, even once they are taken out of the structural system, which generates those rules. So in some cases, it may be true, that 'you can take a Westerner out of the West, but you can't *necessarily* take the West out of a Westerner'. Therefore exposure to cross-cultural relations, or as Bourdieu called it, "culture contact" is not necessarily sufficient to generate change, or to spur that which "phenomenology designates by the term *epoche* [or 'bracketing' as Edmund Husserl coined it], the deliberate, methodical suspension of naïve adherence to the world" (Bourdieu, 1977: 168 [Original emphasis]) Part of the reason for this, I suggest, is found in the very character of habitus, or if you prefer in personal and social dispositions towards difference and the relative attachment to one's cultural frame of reference. It takes more than exposure to other ways of being/thinking and acting to truly make a dent into our own dispositions.

Therefore, when expatriate parents choose to educate their children according to the specific tropes of their class status and culture, notably while living abroad in a cultural context so far removed from that of their familiar cultural framework, it is not

just an act born of one's un/sub-conscious adherence to 'the world as they know it'. Under conditions where expatriate parents are exposed to other cultural possibilities regarding the modalities of adult-child relations and childcare in general, choosing to adhere to their 'home-grown' cultural standards in child-rearing is also a politico-cultural act that substantiates various forms of belonging and boundary maintenance. While expat children/teens are exposed to the host country culture, gaining insight into local ways of doing things, they are also the beneficiaries of cosmopolitan privileges, transferred to them by their parents. Indeed, the entitlement of privileged temporary migrants, like short- and medium-term expatriates who are not required to substantively acculturate to the host country's culture, resides at least in part, in ensuring that their progeny is endowed *primarily* with forms of Western cultural capital, which will provide greater leverage within Western political economies and, with foresight, the competitive market of global labor. Therefore, beyond un/sub-consciously naïve adherence to the world, expatriate parents in Vietnam may also be making calculated choices in favoring Western parenting practices by virtue of the symbolic value that this upbringing has, whether as part of internalized but conscious sensibilities and relationship attachments, and as a response to the requirements of global labor and the perceived value of Western cultural capital. Here, 'calculated choice' does not preclude the fact that parental decisions are informed by both cognition and affective experiences, insofar as subjective anxieties, frustrations and fears (among other feelings) might guide the child-rearing practices of expat parents.

In short, the tendency of Western expatriate parents to reproduce and uphold their national cultural standards as part of their parenting practices represents the de-territorialized negotiation of their values/assumptions, and therefore a form of accommodative adaptation that allows them to stay within a certain emotional and functional comfort zone –the boundaries delineating their sense of familiarity and their know-how. Narratives reveal how cross-cultural dissonance, notably in the ways Vietnamese tend to children, often confronts expatriates: taking them out of their comfort zone or forcing them to reify and re-edify their boundaries. In the same time, this tendency also represents the transnational and trans-generational projection of Western (national) cultural forms/values, which ultimately serves as a testament to the pro-creative proclivity of habitus, even when social actors are immersed in a foreign cultural context.

We have seen how, in so many ways, practice is guided by habitus and/or serves habitus maintenance. Though, I also argued that adaptation can also be understood as adjustments leading to long-term transformation on the self. Indeed, if we focus on situations occurring on a short time scale, in specific fields, we abstract the big picture of subjective identity (trans)formation. Only on a long-term scale can actors retrospectively articulate how expatriation and cross-cultural adaptation/adjustment have affected them, how they have changed over time, how their identities have evolved, etc. This is where the generative and transformative potential of habitus becomes visible. Overtime, expats can become 'Other'. Their life stories tell us how tightly habitus is entwined with identity. Respondent narratives confirm that long-term and/or successive expatriations

constitute a catalyst for some social actors to engage reflexively in habitus and identity (trans)formation. Chapter 7 offers a glimpse into the subjective realities of four respondents, chosen because their life stories underscored an engagement toward introspection and existential forms of reflexivity. These four interviews touched on expatriate adaptation and cross-cultural adjustment in 'hindsight' and with emotional and existential insights. This time respondents reveal how they negotiated their positionality and dispositional propensities over time, and how expatriation and cross-cultural contact have contributed to the development/transformation of their identities.

Chapter 7

REFLEXIVE SELF-ACTUALIZATION:

HARNESSING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF THE HABITUS

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7.1-. Making room for reflexivity: Conceptualizing expatriates' self-actualization

If habitus has a transformative potential, then how do expatriates' transnational and cross-cultural experiences spur it to change or evolve? If we stay true to Bourdieu's work, we hit a conceptual and theoretical impasse when research respondents through a process of reflexive internalization demonstrate forms of awareness regarding their social positions and dispositions, along with a willingness to challenge their own attitudes in the face of new/different cultural, structural and infrastructural conditions. Despite the enduring character of habitus and its propensity to influence practices in ways that reproduce the cultural (and structural) antecedents of expatriates' primary socialization, transnationalism and cross-cultural contact underscore ideal conditions to engage in self-actualization. In other words, expatriates may engage in adaptive practices that accommodate the habitus, though they may also experience situations that confront their habitus and challenge their doxa, thereby spurring reflexive and adaptive practices, which entail the adoption and slow integration of different ways of thinking/acting/being.

It is critical here to understand that various forms of adaptive and reflexive practices are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as these may be deployed in different

fields, in different spaces, with different people, and at different times. In different situations, a social actor's awareness will be contingent on his/her social position and dispositions, and on the way he/she is engaged inter-subjectively with the social world. As Schutz put it: "the knowledge of the man who acts and thinks within the world of his daily life is not homogeneous; it is (1) incoherent, (2) only partially clear, and (3) not at all free from contradictions." (Schutz, 1964: 93) It is therefore understandable that expats may seek accommodating forms of adaptation in one field, and simultaneously be willing to adopt adaptation strategies that confront their habitus and demand deeper forms of self-transformation in another field.

As such, in some situations, cross-cultural encounters and the experiences associated with transnational social life may entail, for some expatriates, conditions that promote or set in motion an in-depth process of self-actualization. In these cases, adaptation strategies may go well beyond accommodation, affecting ways of being, thinking and doing in a manner, which overtime, may reconfigure core dimensions of habitus, and even the articulation of the self. The inquiry at the base of this chapter revolves around how expatriation (medium to long-term and/or successive) may prompt substantial identity transformations or re-formation, and the marked evolution of one's self-concept. As such, this chapter examines, through a selection of case studies, how reflexivity is deployed in this process and whether the concept of a transformative habitus is useful in understanding the phenomenological basis of adaptation and self-actualization.

Without a great deal of reflexivity, expatriates are likely to hold on to, or adhere to the worldview and symbolic universe they've constructed/internalized as part of their primary socialization; and thus, engage in patterns of practice that merely accommodate their dispositions. This can be conceived as a tendency towards universe maintenance.

> Considered as a cognitive construction, the symbolic universe […] originates in processes of subjective reflection, which upon social objectivation lead to the establishment of explicit links between the significant themes that have their roots in the several institutions. In this sense, the theoretical character of symbolic universes is indubitable, no matter how unsystematic or illogical such a universe may seem to an 'un-sympathetic' outsider. *However, one may and typically does live naively within a symbolic universe. Whereas the establishment of a symbolic universe presupposes theoretical reflection on the part of somebody (to whom the world or, more specifically, the institutional order appeared problematic), everybody may 'inhabit' that universe in a taken-for-granted attitude.* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 104 [Emphasis added])

Based on the results and discussions presented in earlier chapters, it seems that many expatriates in Vietnam tend to fall back on adaptation strategies that merely accommodate dimensions of their habitus, rather than substantively challenge their own dispositions and underlying assumptions/expectations. As such, their experiences as foreigners, their shared Western frame of reference and relative class privileges produce dynamics that allow an expat subculture to emerge; one that reinforces boundary maintenance in relation to host country nationals, thereby serving as a 'bubble' in which many members of the expat community find refuge/comfort.

While 'culture contact' can encourage a truly authentic and passionate opening to the Other, expatriates' seemingly ostentatious transnational lifestyles (from the point of view of Vietnamese nationals) and their (re-)enactment of stereotypical attitudes often exemplify what boundary maintenance is about, especially in a postcolonial context. A

recently published video by Ashley and Anemi (2012), entitled *Sh*t Expats in Hanoi Say*[197] provides a critical albeit humoristic representation of expatriates and their typically foolish mannerisms/practices, epitomizing the antithesis of more in-depth forms of adaptation, born of genuine cross-cultural insight.

Video 2 -. *Sh*t Expat in Hanoi Say*
Reproduced with permission
Source: Ashley and Anemi, 2012

This parody video highlights some of the common behaviors and misbehaviors of many expatriates in Hanoi, particularly those that adapt to practical challenges with little reflexivity, a lack of critical self-awareness, and perhaps a deficient will to engage in any profound self-transformation as a result of 'culture contact'. This humoristic

[197] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwgO7eQJBWE

'reconstruction' hits at the heart of stereotypes, revealing patterns of practice that allude to the expatriate lifestyle and to that 'expat bubble', which upholds their advantages, and their relative awkwardness as foreigners/outsiders in Vietnam. The format of the parody, while making fun of expatriates, is also a call to attention, a way to highlight the ridicule of certain behaviors and discourses that are otherwise relatively common. What is interesting is that the makers of the film may have engaged in a critical reflexive process to ensure the script and scenes represented realistic 'performances' and 're-enactments' of practices they are familiar with. (See Appendix H for the script and commentary)

It is important to underline the fact that transnationalism as 'social life' is embedded in the conditions that perpetuate local/global structural inequalities. Therefore, it may be useful to distinguish forms of expatriate adaptation, because it is still common for Western expats to adapt without truly challenging their doxa, those 'taken-for-granted' ways through which they are likely to (re-)enact their 'self-entitlements' or their vision of 'civility' and 'social order', etc. In this sense, adaptation can be conceived as taking many forms, such as superficial tactics that enable situational avoidance (ex: pay the maid to run public errands), boundary maintenance and habitus accommodation (ex: ensure that as many aspects of household practices as possible conform to familiar Western standards), or strategies centered on self-serving forms of learning (ex: learn just enough Vietnamese to pick up women more easily) and or instrumental forms of cross-cultural effectiveness (ex: learn just enough about Vietnamese culture and Vietnamese language to get by when bartering at the market). Conversely, more in-depth adaptation processes may entail self-growth, the re-evaluation of doxic knowledge, substantive

dispositional adjustments, and the reconfiguration of one's symbolic universe (values, beliefs, assumptions, convictions, etc.) over time. The latter forms of adaptation require more time, more effort, more openness (in the form of cross-cultural sensitivity), a willingness to change one's way of thinking/acting, and therefore, forms of reflexivity that include introspection and forms of existential insights.

A parenthesis is necessary at this point to explain and justify the use of '*existential insight*' and '*existentialism*' as emergent concepts in the forthcoming analysis of respondent narratives.[198] Here I draw specifically on the principle of phenomenology, that is to understand the social actor's experience and his/her engagement in making sense of, or giving meaning to social life, as well as his/her involvement in it. In the context of this research and with a focus on the transformative potential of habitus and on processes of self actualization that are born of adaptive practice, this also includes considerations on expatriates' interpretations of the changes that have affected their life, their positionality and their dispositional propensities in both introspective and retrospective ways.[199] In fact, the four case studies I chose for this final chapter were

[198] As a bridge between existential philosophy and sociology, we might find useful to recall that Max Weber (2001 [1930]) in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, drew on ideas put forth by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, in order to substantiate his social action approach. (King, 2010) However, the link between existentialism and sociology is much more salient in the work of symbolic interactionists, who were interested in intersubjective processes of self positioning and self-definition. "The origins and development of the social self has been a topic of symbolic interactionist research and writing since the time of its founders, Charles Horton Cooley, George Herbert Mead, William James, Charles Saunders Pierce, John Dewey, and many others at the University of Chicago at the turn of the twentieth-century. This tradition has emphasized the social nature of the self, and how it emerges and changes in the contexts of interactions with others, at home, with play groups, with peers, friends, in churches and communities, and so on." (Johnson & Melnikov, 2008: 39)

[199] "Existentialism and phenomenology share origins and progenitors, so the linkages between them are inescapable. Existentialism emphasizes real individuals in-the-world, the lived-experience of actual experience, so this raises the question of human perception, and how the external world appears to and is known by individuals. This is where phenomenology comes in. Phenomenology is the rigorous study of consciousness. The goal or purpose of phenomenological analysis is to penetrate the taken-for-granted

drawn from some of the few interviews in which respondents seemed to have taken up a pro-active role in self-(trans)formation. All interview respondents (N=39) demonstrated a relative awareness of the way markers of differentiation modulated their positionality and dispositions, but only seven exchanges spontaneously opened-up on the agents' pro-active engagement in a process of reflexive self-actualization extending from their expatriate and cross-cultural adaptation/adjustment. Of these seven interviews, the cases of Surrey, Roslyn, Ronald and Scott were chosen because they best represented four very different life stories, each entailing distinct positionalities and dispositional propensities (the others contained similarities and redundancies with these ones). These four respondents demonstrated existential concerns linking the meaning of their life choices/trajectories to elements of their identity and self-growth.

Through self- and social reflexivity (critical thought and awareness), respondents may manifest existential insights in the form of passionate engagements towards self-change, personal realization and growth. In the context of respondents' narrative, which I present further, existential insights can be conceived as a

> struggle to find and create meaning in life. Implied here is the idea that […] individuals are free to create meaning (or experience meaninglessness). One may not be totally or absolutely free, but there is freedom to respond to the conditions which confront or face the individual […]. (Johnson & Melnikov, 2008: 34)

The case studies that follow exemplify how the subjective experiences of these expatriates have contributed to their need to 'give a particular meaning' to their life through self-transformations. Subjective experiences are always laden with emotional and

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world of commonsense (which is termed "the natural attitude") in order to grasp and understand how ideas, emotions, and other meanings are seen and interpreted by self or others." (Johnson & Melnikov, 2008: 36)

affective baggage, and as a by-product, social actors may develop forms of existential insights that will orient their self-actualization process. Thus, we also have to heed

> the passionate and emotional aspects of life, and assert the relative dominance of emotions over reason in many circumstances. […] Even superficial reflection shows that our main emotions - love, family loyalty, friendship, joy, ecstasy, appreciation, and many more - are not antithetical to meaningful life, or even reason; they are often the very wellsprings of meaning. (Johnson & Melnikov, 2008: 35)

It is from these angles that the case studies presented in this chapter reveal an existential component to expatriates' reflexive practices. As I strive to show, self-actualization seems to require a deeper form of self-consciousness, which is why existential insights should be conceived as an integral element of self-reflexivity.

Drawing on these chosen narratives, it seems that reflexivity entails in some cases, a propensity for either or both *self*- and *social* reflexivity. The differentiation between self-reflexivity and social reflexivity lies in that self-reflexivity is focused on personal and even private contemplation about the self –one's emotions, motivations, identity, personality, etc. – thus constituting an inner sanctum only partially available to others (through intersubjective praxis, such as communication);[200] whereas

> Social reflexivity refers to the fact that we have constantly to think about, or reflect upon, the circumstances in which we live our lives. When

[200] George Herbert Mead insisted "on the emergence of self-reflectivity out of social situations, but also stress[ed] that this self-reflectivity is the precondition for the constitution of things in instrumental action." (Joas, 1985: 106) Mead added that "Self-reflectivity […] can originate where social actions can themselves be directly perceived by the actor himself, so that – prior to the constitution of the self and hence prior to the differentiation between 'I' and 'you' – my own action can trigger in me the same response as in the other to whom my action is directed." (Joas, 1985: 108) In Mead's own words: "Certainly the fact that the human animal can stimulate himself as he stimulates others and can respond to his stimulations as he responds to the stimulaitons of others, places in his conduct the form of a social object out of which may arise a 'me' to which can be referred so-called subjective experiences." (G.H, Mead – cited in Joas, 1905: 108) Finally, it s crucial to point out, that "This has to be thought of as the capacity for intentional action, and for Mead that means as self-reflectivity; this self-reflectivity and intentionality are necessarily fomred in the structures of intersubjective praxis." (Joas, 1985: 145)

> societies were more geared towards customs and traditions people could follow established ways of doing things in a more unreflective fashion. (Giddens & Griffiths, 2006: 123)

Giddens' approach to social reflexivity suggests that actors have more choices and freedoms to define themselves in 'difference' – on the margins of, or in opposition or apposition to customs and traditions. Giddens' position highlights the fact that many societies today seem to impart more freedom to reflect independently. This is in fact a point of contention that incites criticism, because our present day modern societies are some of the most 'regulated' in the history of human civilizations –thereby pointing to a misrecognition of the conditions of social order, on Giddens' part.

Whereas, from Bourdieu's point of view, many/most social actors in modern societies 'follow unreflexively' what seems to be the dominant way of thinking and acting, based on the trope of the dominant (sub)culture that is associated to their class, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, education level, occupation, etc. This is precisely what Bourdieu's work emphasizes, inasmuch as social actors are always under the influence of structures (within and between fields), and that they are subject to the inescapable effects of these structures, through internalization, on personal and social dispositions (dimensions of habitus).

However I believe Giddens is right in pointing out that in some situations (perhaps more rare than common) what is or used to be 'taken for granted' –that which is in the order of doxa– can be 'suspended' and 'questioned'. This I suggest allows agents to take an active role in the construction of their life, and in the definition of the self, potentially rejecting some of their previously internalized modes of existence or rather

more commonly, acquiring new forms of knowledge that open up new perspectives, attitudes and aptitudes that will play a part in their self-re-definition. As such, self- and social reflexivity would entail forms of critical reflection that are geared towards the re-evaluation of assumptions and doxic modes, leading more "crucially [to] the development of a sense of the self that could be actively chosen" (Giddens & Griffiths, 2006: 241) within the specific social contexts in which actors live and work.

It is important to note that Bourdieu explicitly sought to distance himself from Sartre's notion of existential subjectivity, because it denied or at least neglected the processes by which social actors develop and maintain durable dispositions.[201] However, Bourdieu attempted to heed the work of Husserl and Schutz, among others (Bourdieu 2002b) in an effort to account for the phenomenological basis of practice, despite his tendency to focus on the structural and structuring forces that tend to frame both social life and the configuration of individual dispositions (as part of habitus). While Bourdieu accounted for inter-subjectivity indirectly, in a manner that emphasizes the production and reproduction of structural constraints (the rules of the game within the context of structural inequalities and symbolic violence) (Bourdieu, 1977; 1977 [1972]; 1984; 1985; 1990a; 2005a); his approach largely neglects and even negates the role of consciousness in the configuration of dispositions and in the mediation of collective social action. (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992; Bourdieu, 1998).

[201] Sartrean existentialism is problematic for its refusal "to recognise anything resembling durable dispositions, Sartre makes each action a sort of unprecedented confrontation between the subject and the world... If the world of action is nothing other than this universe of interchangeable possibles, entirely dependent on the decrees of the consciousness which creates it and hence totally devoid of objectivity, if it is moving because the subject chooses to be moved, revolting because he chooses to be revolted, then emotions, passions and actions are merely games of bad faith, sad farces in which one is both bad actor and good audience […]" (Bourdieu, 1977: 73-74)

Whereas Schutz's approach fell in line with the interactionist tradition,[202] attempting to clarify the relationship between the individual and the collective, and highlighting the complex psycho-social, linguistic and semiotic negotiations that occur as a result of an actor's interaction with, and interpretation/apprehension of, the social world.[203] (Schutz, 1962) Adaptation can thus, also be understood using the Schutzian analogy: only when recipes don't work or when typifications are not representative, do social actors tend to adopt new ways of interacting with, and interpreting, the social world and their lived experiences.[204] (Appelrouth & Desfor Edles, 2011 [2010]) "Nevertheless, overall Schutz clearly emphasizes the taken-for-granted character of the lifeworld much more than he does the ability of actors to use the elements of the lifeworld" (Appelrouth & Desfor Edles, 2011 [2010]: 269-270) to meet their relative needs or fulfill their subjective drives. This, as I showed in previous chapters, seems to extend to expatriates' tendencies towards more superficial forms of adjustments. The problem is that self-actualization and the subjective reflections that support adaptation may also go beyond habitus accommodation, while being anchored on deep personal

[202] Here, I refer to the seminal work of Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead, notably foundational ideas such as 'the looking glass self', the distinction betweent the 'I' (the knowing) and the 'Me' (the known) and the theorization of social communication and social action as the basis of intersubjectivity. (Cooley, 1998; Joas, 1985; Gutman, 1958)

[203] "From the outset, we, the actors on the social scene, experience the world we live in as a world both of nature and of culture, not as a private but as an intersubjective one, that is a world common to all of us, either actually given or potentially accessible to everyone, and this involves intercommunication and language" (Schuts, 1962: 53)

[204] "Schutz argues that we function with 'cook book knowledge…..recipes….to deal with the routine matters of daily life. Most of our daily activities from rising to going to bed are of this kind. According to Ritzer (1998), these our daily activities are performed by folkway recipes which has been reduced to cultural habits of unquestioned platitudes' (Natanson, 1976 as cited in Ritzer, 1998). He further maintained that, even when we encounter unusual or problematic situation, we first try to use our recipes. Only when it is abundantly clear that our recipes won't work do we abandon them and seek to create, to work out mentally new ways of dealing with the situations." (Ajiboye, 2012: 19)

motivations. As such, on-its-own, inter-subjectivity (although an important component of social praxis) falls short of explaining how people engage in profound self-transformations overtime. The impasse we must overcome, conceptually and theoretically, stems from an understanding that migrant adaptation may also generate emotions and subjective experiences that lead to the adoption of practices that prompt a reconfiguration of habitus. It is this process that I attempt to reveal in phenomenological terms.

Here, the concept of reflexivity (encompassing both self- and social reflexivity) and therefore reflexive learning is useful in recognizing the relative propensity of social actors to not only acknowledge adaptation imperatives, but also to manifest subjective motivation in the adjustment of their behaviors or attitudes, either as a result of culture contact and cross-cultural inter-subjectivity, and/or thanks to the conscious recognition of their need to make meaning out of their transnational experiences and to channel this 'meaning-making' towards self-realization and self-transformation. Reflexivity is a pivotal aspect of self-actualization, and it is through reflexive processes that expats will sometimes question and revise some of their assumptions and expectations, and therefore, choose to challenge rather than reproduce class or cross-cultural boundaries, demonstrating a willingness to change themselves, using expatriation as an impetus to become different. It is through this process precisely that *reflexivity* (as a disposition) is

either developed or mobilized by expatriates, who in turn may nurture transnational and transcultural identities.[205]

In his last lecture, Bourdieu (2004) focused on science as the main focus of his analysis of reflexivity, so it seems as though he conceived of reflexivity as a process that occurs specifically (but not necessarily exclusively) in the production of scientific knowledge.

> One cannot talk about an object without exposing oneself to a permanent mirror effect: every word that can be uttered about scientific practice can be turned back on the person who utters it. This echo, this reflexivity, is not reducible to the reflexions [sic] on itself of an 'I think' (cogito) thinking an object (cogitatum) that is nothing other than itself. It is the image sent back to a knowing subject by other knowing subjects equipped with analytical tools which may have been provided to them by this knowing subject. Far from fearing this mirror – or boomerang – effect, in taking science as the object of my analysis I am deliberately exposing myself, and all those who write about the social world to a generalized reflexivity. (Bourdieu, 2004: 4)

Bourdieu argues that the "field of the disciplines and agents that take science as their object […] is presumed […] to situate itself in the order of the 'meta', of the reflexive, in other words at the pinnacle or foundation, it is dominated by philosophy […]." (Bourdieu, 2004: 7) In this statement he equates reflexivity to a 'meta-analytical practice', which is born of philosophical contemplations. But reflexivity is also embedded in, and dependent on, modes of perception, cognitive acquisitions, emotional

[205] The concept of 'transcultural identities' is increasingly used in social sciences, as a narrower and more targeted concept replacing the notion of 'hybrid identities', and as a broader and less constrained conceptualization than that of 'transnational identities'. Sell (2004) is concerned "with the ambivalent condition of the transcultural subject, who may unabashedly declare, for example, dual sitedness by holding two passports […] and whose allegiances may be questioned […] when caught cheering on the wrong side at cricket. Thirdly, […] the transcultural subject causes us to rethink our own self-representations before either expansively modifying or defensively reasserting them, our modification or reassertion depending on whether we see transculturality as an opportunity or threat to ourselves and to society at large." (Sell, 2004: 30)

articulations, and perhaps even intuitiveness; and based on these, it modulates volition and therefore practice.

> Furthermore, reflexivity is not a given but is based on self-reflection which emerges from the reflexive dialogue that humans hold with themselves. [… Par.] In her recent work, Margaret Archer has made the internal conversation central to reflexivity. For her, reflexivity is defined as the mental capacity of people to consider themselves in relation to their social context (2003). The internal conversation mediates between structure (the social context which provides enablements and constraints to social action) and agency, [… although] there are things of which we remain non-conscious [and which] can play no part in the conscious, reflexive deliberations of the active agent (Archer, 2003: 25). (Burkitt, 2012: 462)

It is the process through which expatriates objectivate the social realities they find themselves in. Beyond this, reflexivity is also an important gateway for social actors to explore why they might think/act in certain ways, to gain access to a deeper understanding of the 'reasons' and/or genealogical roots behind their own practices and practices of representation. In short, it seems that reflexivity is also a catalyst for self-assessment, and for a conscious apprehension of the conditions that produce the 'self'.

As such, I suggest that 'meta-analytical practice' is not solely the purview of epistemologists and scientists, but rather, that reflexivity, as a 'reflection on the reflections' (reasons and motivations) that orient actions/attitudes/practice, can be put to the service of a critical and sometimes radical capacity to question the underpinnings of our own symbolic universe, so that we are agents engaged in forms of self-assessment, in a less erudite form perhaps, that is nonetheless anchored on the existential articulation of thoughts and deliberation. Therefore reflexivity, the kind that is accessible to expats who are engaged in processes of self actualization, may point to a conscious and responsive

disposition towards problem solving, innovation and change, whereby social actors may succeed in objectivating him/her-self and his/her actions/attitudes/practice, with the agency to review or modify not only the outer manifestation of who they are (actions/attitudes/practice), but also the inner mechanisms on which their concept of self is founded.

In fact, D'Andrea, in *Global Nomads, Techno and New Age as transnational countercultures in Ibiza and Goa*, makes this point even more saliently, by highlighting that some modern expatriates and the 'neo-nomads' he studied, actively rejected key aspects of their Western culture and demonstrated their "affective and visceral engagements with radical alterity in reshaping personhood." (D'Andrea, 2007: 15-16) D'Andrea (2010) focuses on a particular cohort of highly mobile expatriates whose transnational lifestyle and identities is associated with recursive or cyclical departures to other countries where they stay for extended periods, a severed connection with original homelands' state-market-morality regimes; the adoption of cosmopolitan culture, the holistic integration of labor, leisure and spirituality, the romantic representation of non-Western cultures, the establishment of a lifestyle symbiosis between tourism, entertainment and wellness, leading to the appropriation and consumption of alternative commodity forms, etc. This is not to say that they necessarily put in question the very categories/representations that structured their former worldviews, but rather that they might actively reject one set of categories/representations for another. Certainly a more in-depth longitudinal ethnography of these neo-nomads could reveal to what extend such identity (trans)formations are consistent with the re-evaluation of doxic modes.

Despite the fact that D'Andrea does not fully problematize how the 'lifestyle' of these neo-nomads reifies class privilege within the framework of transnational social life, the study of these 'global nomads' is interesting because it challenges the tenets of conventional geo-centered ethnography by exploring the relative role of placement and displacement or location and relocation in identity formation. (D'Andrea, 2010) For D'Andrea, neo-nomadism or the type of cosmopolitanism or transnationalism that characterizes the social life of this specific cohort of expatriates seems to enable the emergence of "new forms of identity that are based, not on sameness or fixity, but rather on a principle of metamorphosis […]." (D'Andrea, 2010: 6) D'Andrea studied a distinct cohort of expats within a particular counter-culture, which points to core differences between his research subjects and mine. Expats in Vietnam are not part of a counter-culture that is produced through the severing of connections with Western state-market-morality regimes. Rather, by virtue of their shared experiences, values and predilections, and of their special status as 'privileged foreigners', most Western expatriates in Vietnam are part of a particular subculture within the receiving context. However, one of the more poignant arguments within D'Andrea's work is that the conditions of globalization or transnational social life may serve as a catalyst for non-teleological and unpredictable forms of self-reflexivity, which in turn might lead to self-transformation. In studying the hippy and club scene in Ibiza, D'Andrea notes that for this specific group of expats, departure from the homeland and the adoption of an 'alternative lifestyle' in this receiving context, is an impetus for self exploration and self-transformation. (D'Andrea,

2010: 124) In this sense, it seems that the capacity and willingness to change is founded on another overlapping disposition: adaptability.

Reflexivity without 'sufficient' or 'appropriate' adaptability entails awareness without the ability/willingness to change, the recognition of different situational conditions that might require adjustment, but an inability to follow through with any substantive adjustment that would entail the fundamental "putting into question" and "transformation" of what we are, what we are used to, what we 'prefer' and what we feel/think. In such cases, the psychosocial impact of a cross-cultural 'blockages' can warrant an expedited repatriation to one's homeland. At an expatriate meeting where I was recording my exchanges through observant participation, an expat who works as a post-arrival counselor for Western expats, conceded that he "had to send some people back as soon as possible" and that sometimes "they became so depressed and unstable that heavy medication was in order." Conversely, adaptability without the existential insights imparted through self- and social-reflexivity leads to superficial and non-controversial adjustments such as *situational avoidance* and *habitus accommodation* – adjustments that do not affect the core constitution of habitus, much like some of the scenes in Ashley's and Anemi's video *Sh*t expats in Hanoi Say*.

Thus, I suggest that an important theoretical direction, to advance Bourdieu's contribution within the field of migration and transnationalism, should address the conjunctive role of *reflexivity* and *adaptability* in prompting knowledge acquisition, attitudinal shifts, a 'bracketing' of doxa, and through iterative practice, a potential re-configuration of habitus, leading to forms of self-actualization. I suggest that through this

process and given the right circumstances, migrants and expatriates who may not necessarily have been raised as third culture kids, can develop transnational or trans-cultural identities, and/or engage in forms of emancipatory self-actualization, because life in a foreign cultural context, in addition to serving as a catalyst for life-changing experiences, also implies various forms of de-habituation and re-habituation, which serve as secondary socialization, affecting expatriates' dispositions overtime.

In this sense, it is also important to emphasize the role of habit, notably in its formative effects on habitus, but also in reforming or re-shaping it overtime. In the context of adaptation in a foreign cultural context, 'recursiveness' may be a crucial element in allowing expats to develop new dispositions as 'second nature'. Recursiveness explains how a practice that is relatively unfamiliar and potentially awkward at first can become 'intrinsic' over time. This is interesting because it speaks to the conjuncture of both individual agency and structural forces.

> The term 'practice' implies repetitive performance in order to become 'practised' [sic]; that is, to attain recurrent, habitual or routinized accomplishment of particular actions. […] Practice is thus a particular type of self-reinforcing learning akin to single loop or exploitative learning theories (cf. Argote, 1999). The routinized nature of practice may be explained by theories of social order, such as structuration (Giddens, 1984), in which the interaction between agent and structure is recursive. […] First, practice is institutionalized [sic] in social structures that persist across time and space. Secondly, institutional social structures are incorporated in the daily practices that constitute action. Thirdly, structures persist through the tacit knowledge and practical consciousness of actors who choose familiar patterns because it provides them with "ontological security" (ibid: 64). [Par.] Bourdieu (1990) further elaborates the reciprocity between agent and structure [referring to the habitus as] socially constructed but transcend[ing…] the individual […]. The temporal persistence of habitus shapes the aspirations of those who enact it in daily practice. [… Par.] Both Bourdieu and Giddens provide a rationale for the stable and institutional characteristics of practice, albeit

> that structuration predicates this stability on the ontological security of the actor while habitus is a more structurally oriented theory. (Jarzabkowski, 2002: 4-6)

The transformative potential of expatriates' habituses is thus maximized by the combination of *reflexive adaptation* and the recursive nature of practice, particularly if the latter encompasses the adoption and continued application of 'new'/'different' modes of transaction in a cultural and structural context that was once unfamiliar to them. Though with a focus on subjectivity, self-actualization as a process cannot be disassociated from the personal and conscious engagement of actors in a process of self-change. As such, it is crucial to reiterate that a

> focus on stability obscures the adaptive nature of practice (cf. Orlikowski, 2000) and will be termed here the problem of recursiveness. [Par. …] At the level of the actor, the problem is largely a psychological one arising from individual cognition. The mental models of actors are subject to structural influences such as formal operating procedures (Cyert and March, 1963), heuristic devices (Newell, Shaw and Simon, 1962), and, in interpretative theories, to stored cognitive recipes (Weick, 1969). The relationship between thought and action arises from procedural memory, the skill-base associated with cognition. Procedural memory predisposes those familiar routinized actions developed from experience that actors undertake without conscious thought (Cohen and Bacdayan, 1994). (Jarzabkowski, 2002: 4-6)

In short, the problem of recursiveness is that persistent changes in behaviors as well as the progressive internalization of new sets of practices, do not necessarily equate, or lead to self-actualization. The focus on structure and stability produce a gap in theory, whereby it is assumed that change might occur only or mostly, as a matter of automatism and functional learning within the social structure.[206] Though with a focus on self and

[206] "Adaptation, being varying degrees of change from incremental adjustment to radical reorientation, may be explained using the theory of social becoming (Pettigrew, 1990; Sztompka, 1991). Sztompka (1991)

social reflexivity, the case studies that follow demonstrate well the personal engagement and empowerment of social actors in their process of 'becoming', denoting the link between existential insights (born of self- and social reflexivity), agency (spurred by subjective motivations) and the conditions awarded by transnational social life.

Adaptation as actions and pro-active forms of adjustments can be identified and isolated with a view to causes and effects, as I have done in previous chapter, highlighting how local dynamics in the receiving context may confront dimensions of habitus, producing cross-cultural dissonance and adaptation imperatives. However adaptation is also an on-going process entailing ups and downs, crises and resolutions that may lead to attitudinal shifts, which overtime might be internalized through recursive practice. Of course, many attitudinal adjustment remain superficial and temporary, though this does not preclude that some personal changes might inflect the very articulations of identity, in terms of our sense of personhood: how we are, where we feel we belong, what seems normal or absurd, who we feel we relate to, our rapport to time and space, how we understand Others, etc. Though in rendering this process, it is once again the subjectivity of respondents, which reveals the link between reflexive adaptation and self-actualization, and therefore the transformative potential of the habitus. In this

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[…] posits that […] potential reality and actual reality are in a continual state of […] feedback in the process of social becoming. Sztompka's theory is one of "a living, socio-individual field in the process of becoming" (ibid:95). […] He identifies practice as the unit of analysis for observing 'becoming', which is the chain of social events "where operation and action meet, a dialectic synthesis of what is going on in a society and what people are doing" (ibid: 96). [Par.] Practice is an evolving process of social order arising from the interplay between external and internal social structure building. […] There is thus an ongoing process of social becoming that is realised [sic] through a chain of social events, or practice." (Jarzabkowski, 2002: 7-8)

respect, the narratives of four respondents were chosen to highlight how/why expatriation and transnational social life may affect the identity correlates of habitus.

7.2-. The case of Surrey: Cultural chameleon, change and self-growth

Surrey is one of the respondents who shared some of the more interesting existential insights out of the sample of interviewees, demonstrating a capacity for self and social reflexivity, which seemed to orient her self-concept and personal growth. She readily described herself as a 'work in progress' with an awareness of the connections between her transnational and cross-cultural experiences on one hand, and the opportunities and choices that contribute to her self-realization on the other hand. For ten years, Surrey has "been hopping from place to place, [staying] on average […] between one and three years" in each place. She explained that she

> Surrey [North American, temporary resident - mid-term visa]: […] left home to find myself, but when I went back after my first year away, it was the same as before. […] I felt incomplete, out of my element… as if I didn't belong… so I left again. I go back to visit sometimes but I'm not interested in living in America. It's just not me…

Surrey's desire to leave her homeland was founded on feelings and the impression of 'not belonging', not feeling at home and 'feeling incomplete'. Surrey took on departure and expatriation as a way to 'search for herself', which reifies the relevance of a form of self-reflexivity that is shaped by existential insights and the need to define who she is, to 'give meaning' to her life choices and social existence.

> Interviewer: So did you find yourself overseas and what did you find?
> Surrey: [laugh] Ahh hAh, […] I did find myself in a way but it's more like work in progress… like I'm unfinished… I think the first thing is when I realized what I was running from… the sort of sheltered life that people

> live [where I am from], like their disconnected from everything else that's going on in the world, like the choices they make don't affect anyone else. Like… I just wanted… [pause] no … I needed to escape […].

Surrey is talking about escape and running from something, like expatriation is a solution to an identity crisis, demanding her to act, to 'engineer' her life, and be pro-active in choosing/constructing who she is. By acknowledging what she did not want to become, she became empowered to 'take charge' of her life. She accepts that her identity is 'in the making' and she believes she can act on it, as an agent engaged in the production of his/her self-concept. She confirmed that she saw herself as 'unfinished', so her project of 'finding herself' substantiated the broader endeavor of self-realization. Surrey's introspection emphasized her awareness of what is important to her, and what she felt she needed in her life:

> Interviewer: mmh, which is…
> Surrey: Change, to always be a little bit out of my comfort zone, to keep learning, … to be receptive to those important lessons in life, to take less for granted… you know when people get too comfortable, they become arrogant and have that sense of […] entitlement… and that just bugs me… I don't want to be like that …

It is interesting that Surrey's existential insights prompt her to negotiate her positionality in opposition to particular 'ways of being'. Surrey chooses a transnational life as a way to grow and to learn, but also to 'avoid internalizing' specific attitudes, which she disdains. She acknowledges that intangible structural forces and cultural dynamics play a part in the internalization of what is "taken for granted" and consciously as well as reflexively rejects some of the attitudes that are underscored by doxa. Surrey refers to America as the cultural and structural setting that she wishes to leave behind but without providing clear

details as to the connection she was making between 'where she is from' and her sense of alienation/exclusion.

She did however explain what 'type of attitude' she found objectionable and why she felt American consumerism was producing social dynamics she sought to escape. After a pause in our exchange, Surrey changed her tone of voice and seemed more focused:

> Surrey: I remember this one time back home, I was at a coffee shop waiting in line, and when the woman ahead of me ordered her coffee, the girl a the counter noticed that the coffee pot was finished so she said sorry and asked the woman if she could wait a couple minutes for the fresh coffee to be made. The woman rudely raised her voice, looking at me like I should've been on her side… 'well I don't have a choice do I?' [she said] so I said 'actually you do, you can walk out and go somewhere else' but that wasn't enough, she really wanted to get on everyone's case so she asked to talk to the manager, and complained about having to wait for her coffee… the manager was so apologetic… he explained that they'd just had a rush of people and they got backed-up, and then the lady still unsatisfied said she shouldn't have to pay… I just couldn't believe it… […] I went home that day feeling like I needed to pack my bags and move as far away as possible… I mean what makes people like that?… what is it about our consumer society that turns people into pricks! […]

Surrey's account reify her subjective experience and the perception that cultural dynamics and structural conditions in America are producing an environment that compels many to internalize a sense of consumerist self-entitlement, which she said is also making people "numb, complacent and ambivalent about all the good and all the bad that is happening around us." More importantly, she explains how her successive expatriations helped her find some of her own subjective truths about the world, prompting her to engage in reflexive practices that clarified how she relates to the social world.

> Interviewer: So at this point in your life, what is it about living in Vietnam as an expat that is different?
> Surrey: Well… with everywhere I've been, I found that there's asshole everywhere and that I can't do anything about it. [Laugh …] Like there's a whole bunch of expats right here in Hanoi that complain about everything all the time, that's all they do… just like that lady…. But there's a lot of people too who aren't like that you know… More enlightened. More self and socially aware somehow… the kind of people who count their blessing for being right where they are and don't take so much for granted…

It is interesting that Surrey uses the term 'enlightened', connoting a certain type of wisdom. Her narrative shows an awareness of her privilege, an appreciation of her social position, but also a condemnation of the tendency of many expatriates to take their relative advantages for granted. Her annoyance with the inclination of some expats to complain recalls her experience of that 'lady in the coffee shop', whose sense of self-entitlement speaks to one of her social aversions.

Her account implies that the life choices she is making as an expatriate are informed by a particular consciousness and conscientiousness about the world she lives in, and about the attitude of people. However, when asked how and whether she relates to other expats in Vietnam, she diverts her answer, focusing on her own journey, as if her social connections in Vietnam matter less than her own growth.

> Interviewer: So do you identify with expats here?
> Surrey: Yes and no… I mean that's not the point… I identify with my journey… like at every step of the way, I learn something about myself, I work on my weaknesses and develop my strengths… I learn about people from other cultures, and what they think are strengths and weaknesses… and… I try to stay focused on who I want to be and what I don't want to be […].

Her situation as a highly mobile expatriate may have something to do with her response, in that her departure and transience in the last ten years, probably speak to her disposition

as somewhat of a 'loner', someone who is self-focused, independent and solitary. Her experience through successive relocations denotes her ability to 'restart' her life at every step, whereby the practical terms of successive re-settlement require little attachment to material, cultural and structural conditions. However, much of the continuity she cultivates seems to be grounded in her on-going process of self-realization.

She described her self-concept as being 'in flux', which is in line with her lifestyle, notably her open disposition towards change. Her focus on personal growth indicates that she is 'building her self-identity' as an aggregate of what she is 'taking in' at 'every step' of the way. She seemed to invest effort in channeling her experiences through reflexive learning. For Surrey, self-actualization implies a strong individual focus and a capacity to address the development of her potential. In fact, in light of a past experience, Surrey also demonstrated a conscious effort and commitment to protecting/nurturing her personal integrity, taking expatriation as a chance to 'actualize herself', to revise her attitudes and choose to learn from her mistakes, taking them as opportunities to 'fashion her life' as she 'starts' another phase of her life, elsewhere.

> Surrey: It's more about the choices I make along the way… I mean I left [… a] job […] because I was asked to falsify reports… I did it a few times because I was afraid to get fired… but then I didn't want to be that person anymore… so I looked for another job in another country… and when I quit, and moved again, I felt liberated to leave that behind… it's like moving to another country, starting a new job, or whatever, it's like a chance to remake yourself… or the parts of yourself that you want to shed…

Surrey is aware that her actions and choices have repercussions on her self-concept, and her successive expatriations have served as a means to create ruptures with aspects of herself she wanted to shed, while nurturing counter-balancing attitudes, notably her sense

of personal integrity and righteousness –to choose not to "be" a certain type of person, is in line with a personal sense of agency and a sense of empowerment over one's life. This is not to say that habitus has no significant hold on her life, because it does. But she is consciously trying to mold it according to the knowledge she is gaining through her experiences. Her narrative shows that her engagement in self-development is meant to challenge habitus, to keep it fluid, and not too set. Flexibility then becomes a disposition, while self-reflexivity seem to can the 'subject' into 'object' in order for the agent to analyze it, and act upon it. Her transnational displacements/relocations act as a catalyst for both self- and social reflexivity, thereby informing who she wants to be, what values she wants to live by, what she admires and respect in others, and how she chooses to 'take-in' or apprehend her transnational and cross-cultural experiences. As she says, her 'unfinished self' is being built with the choices she makes, her decision to leave or stay, her experiences and the 'knowledge' (insights) she gains along the way. Her decisions to move from country to country are symbolic of 'leaving something behind' but also of 'moving forwards'. What is evident in her narrative, and which is symptomatic of having "lived in 6 countries in the last decade" is that her identity as a nomad is not articulated through the appropriation local cultural forms (wherever she is), or through a process of acculturation in relation to Vietnamese culture specifically, or any of the cultures where she resided.

With sojourns ranging from one to three years, Surrey's transience can be conceived as relatively prohibitive in terms of an expat's capacity to learn about and integrate elements of the host culture. While Surrey is developing a transnational identity,

embracing change and growth, her relatively short stays in different receiving contexts does not allow her to deeply internalize the adjustments she make in relation to specific host cultures. In turn, she is turning herself into a "cultural chameleon," capable of making punctual and effective behavioral adjustments in one or another culture. This high level of adaptability is thus becoming part and parcel of who she is. Though at a deeper reflexive level, her self-actualization is more like a "pick and choose" process, whereby she seeks to appropriate whatever life lessons she feels are relevant to her. Her ability to focus on her own self-development and to live comfortably in different cultures successively, speaks to her adaptability but also to her willingness to suspend her doxic knowledge and some of the assumptions/expectations that many Westerners tend to take for granted as 'givens', as basic common sense or as the ideal standard of comparison. As such, her self-actualization is motivated by the circumstances of continual 'dépaysement', but also by her ability to engage reflexively in her everyday life. She was also aware that her position and choice to remain free from spousal or parenting ties, and her ability to capitalize on her education and qualifications to work internationally, allowed her much time to engage in introspection, self care and self growth.

The metaphor of the cultural chameleon evokes well the polyvalent nature that Surrey tries to cultivate. Her transnational identity underscores her ability to quickly learn how to feel at home in different cultures, and her willingness to abide by local scripts so that "when in Rome, do as the Romans do". This does not extend to a deep process of acculturation, but rather to a series of practical adjustments, which in themselves are temporary, but which, cumulatively, are part and parcel of what Surrey consciously seeks

to be/become. She admitted to 'performing' locally appropriate social script, while negotiating these with her need to remain genuine and maintain her personal integrity. Like the chameleon that changes the colors of its skin to match its environment, Surrey's adaptability, or rather her ability to adapt from one culture to another with ease, speaks to her self-project: to embrace change as a way of life, to avoid taking things for granted, while reflexively trying to make meaning out of her life, by virtue of the lessons she retains through her varied experiences. Surrey's self-contemplation and her focus on personal growth reify the link between her reflexive practices (which include existential insights), and the on-going evolution of her habitus. Most importantly, her process of self-actualization is linked to her desire to 'bracket' her doxic modes, and to remain critical of that tendency to 'take things for granted'.

7.3-. The case of Roslyn: Building a multi-cultural self through successive expatriations

The experiences of expatriates differ, though their life stories can elucidate how subjective motivations spurred their adaptive choices along the way. Expatriates' subjective engagement with Vietnam as a receiving context is modulated by their cross-cultural exposure, not only in Vietnam, but also in other host countries. Expatriates who experience successive expatriations for a large portion of their life are exposed to multiple cultures, one after the other; and when sojourns are long enough, they may be required to substantively unlearn and (re)learn how to negotiate their positionality in the context local structural and cultural conditions each time they resettle. We saw, in the

case of Surrey that her successive short- to medium-term expatriations in foreign cultural contexts entailed constant change, a situation that allowed her to develop a transnational identity –but not a trans-cultural one, based on her willingness to embrace change, and her ability to quickly learn how to feel at home anywhere. Though Surrey didn't stay long enough in each receiving context to appropriate, integrate and internalize local norms, values, and modes of practice, to make local ways of thinking/acting/being, her own. So her cross-cultural adjustments are practical and situational, while her focus rests on the potential of her self-realization and personal growth, entailing to some extent, the suspension of doxa as a premise to her self-concept instead. By contrast, when sojourns are long enough, successive expatriations may offer an opportunity to develop a multicultural or trans-cultural identity, one that integrates elements of multiple cultures based on a process of self-actualization, which is influenced by medium to long-term periods of cultural re-socialization, leading to partial acculturation and the production of a culturally polyvalent identity.

The case of Roslyn exemplifies well this type of transnational/transcultural social life, whereby serial relocations produce expected practical challenges, while also providing conditions that impel the (trans)formation of the self.

> Roslyn [North American, medium-term visa]: […] we've had to move every four or five years. So each time we have to get used to things in a new country. […] Our kids grew up on four continents […]. Everywhere we've settled there's been challenges. […] Getting to know people and developing a network of friends is important to me…. Finding my way around, … communicating with locals so I can understand their ways, … finding a job, … finding what I need to manage the household, … […] all these things are important, and we start from scratch every time we move…

The personal priorities of expatriates are always subjectively defined, notably in relation to their social position, their internalized roles, and related dispositions (sensibilities, preferences, values, etc.). With every relocation, "starting from scratch" refers specifically to the practical challenges of setting up a home, finding resources, developing social networks, and establishing a routine, while getting used to local structural constraints, and getting to know local cultural forms. This is a tall order. This does not mean however that expatriates' adaptation can be reduced to practical challenges and punctual cross-cultural adjustments. In many ways, expatriation, notably relocation into new cultural contexts may fuel important transformations affecting the personal character of expats over time, and modulating how they relate to both: difference and Others.

> Interviewer: How do you think that living in so many countries has changed you?
> Roslyn: Well you certainly have to learn to appreciate the journey… hum… as a person, I think I've become more flexible, mmmh… less critical of cultural differences… [Pause] You know at first foreign ways can be shocking and I was quick to label them as strange and backward, but I think it's good to get over that, because our ways are sometimes strange for our hosts too. […] Once I realized that the world is beautiful and interesting because, and not in spite of differences, […] then I started really soaking in my blessed life. […]

At play are a number of realizations. The conception of successive relocations as "a journey" underscores the emotional and psychosocial significance of expatriation, as if a pilgrimage of sorts, implying ups and downs in the production/acquisition of deeper insights about the life world. Becoming "more flexible" and "less critical of cultural differences" beyond simple tolerance, denotes acceptance, understanding and a willingness to suspend one's judgment in light of strange or unfamiliar ways of doing

things. Meanwhile reflexive insights on how Western ways might appear from the point of view of Others speak to Roslyn's capacity to objectivate her own ways of being/acting/thinking, to view these beyond her subjective attachments/dispositions, and imagine how 'foreign' they might seem for host country nationals. This is precisely the type of 'cross-cultural inter-subjectivity' that leads to a more open and even-handed assessment of differences, and therefore to the type of social reflexivity that may encourage a reformulation of doxic knowledge, and the type of self-reflexivity that spur important attitudinal shifts that challenge old dispositions. So "getting over that," means developing a different cognitive and emotional attitude in the face of potential cross-cultural dissonance. Finally, the articulation of a meta-narrative on "the world" and "the beauty of differences" experienced through the subjective "soaking-in" of a "blessed life", points Roslyn's worldview about her transnational experiences, about her exposure to and immersion into many foreign cultural contexts, about the progressive development of her cross-cultural awareness and the consciousness of her privileges. This is a layered and complex narrative, underscoring how expatriation and cross-cultural adaptation may impact subjective experiences and the articulation of the self.

Roslyn explained that as soon as she arrived in Vietnam, she took intensive Vietnamese lessons along with one of her children (who was finishing high school, before planning to leave for University in Europe). After 3 years in Vietnam, she speaks Vietnamese very well and is properly integrated in the expatriate community and amongst various groups of middle-upper class Vietnamese. Although her class belonging remains intact, her ability to adjust cross-culturally after living in so many countries

denote a high degree of reflexivity, going beyond 'practical requirements' and emphasizing her need to connect with locals and expats in a meaningful way.

> Kim (2008) suggested that an individual who frequently experiences acculturation may achieve an intercultural identity, described as "an open-ended, adaptive, and transformative self-other orientation" (p. 364). A key element of this dynamic and integrative cultural identity is a clear self-definition, which enables one to see past cultural stereotypes and focus on commonalities rather than on differences. (Moore & Barker, 2012: 554-555)

Living in diverse countries over the years has shaped Roslyn's appreciation for cross-cultural differences and she was able to hone-in on cross-cultural knowledge, which helped her adapt effectively in one location after another. Everywhere she moved she prepared by reading about the host culture and local people, and always took language lessons very seriously and is now well verse in six languages. She reported "taking something away with her" out of every country or culture where she has lived. She learned to appreciate visual and performance art, food, folkloric traditions, from country to country, and filled her house with pictures and objects that help her remember the beauty of where she's been, and the symbolic significance attributed to the cultural forms she found most endearing. While all social actors wherever they are, are bound to cultural consumption patterns, expatriates who integrate elements of multiple cultures become consumers of related cultural forms, first and perhaps often, through the encroachment of a neo-colonial form of capitalist materialism, but sometimes as in Roslyn's case, through a deep personal attachment to the places, and people, that expats connect with along their journey. Roslyn walked me through her home, explaining the meaning behind countless objects (paintings, pictures, sculptures, dolls/statues, vases/potteries, etc.), which she kept

either on display or tucked away in a chest or a drawer. She talked about each object in relation to memories, explaining their significance with distinct emotional tonalities, denoting her self-investment in the production or appreciation of the meanings that she associated to these objects. In most cases she was able to distinguish how objects had overlapping personal, marital, familial, cultural, social, professional significance, providing clear recollections linking each objects to her social position as a friend/helper, as a wife, as a mother, as a Westerner, as a foreigner in an unfamiliar country, as a development worker, etc.

Her consumption practices went beyond simple 'cosmopolitan consumerism', whereby the Other is merely consumed as an artifact or relic, objectified and reduced by modern aesthetic concerns rather than traditional cultural meanings. There was, behind each story, each anecdote, a deep appreciation for the places and people that touched her and her family, along a journey that began over 30 years ago. For Roslyn, these objects have symbolic value; they represent mementos that recall formative and transformative moments of her life in various cultural settings. Roslyn gave a number of examples where mere objects helped her recall turning points in her cross-cultural adaptation, pivotal relationships with host country nationals, as well as fundamental realizations that came as forms of learning. In fact,

> new cultural learning is the essence of acculturation, that is, the acquisition of the new cultural practices in wide-ranging areas including the learning of a new language. Acculturation brings about a development of cognitive complexity, or the structural refinement in an individual's internal information processing ability with respect to the target culture. An equally significant aspect of acculturation is the acquisition of new cultural aesthetic and emotional sensibilities, from a new way of appreciating beauty, fun, joy, as well as despair, anger, and the like.

> Acculturative learning does not occur randomly or automatically following intercultural contacts and exposures. New cultural elements are not simply added to prior internal conditions. Rather, it is a process over which each individual has a degree of freedom or control, based on his or her predispositions, pre-existing needs and interests. (Kim, 2008: 363)

Roslyn's adaptation entailed getting used to successive cultures while maintaining her own national cultural belonging, which she nurtured through regular trips home. As a result, she developed significant cross-cultural competence. She effectively embodied her transnational lifestyle, though on a subjective level she explained that successive relocations and her cross-cultural experiences have all served to define her concept of self.

> Roslyn: I think I am still Western in many ways. […] but there are many aspects of [the host country cultures where I used to live in] that I continue to practice. I have taken with me ways of cooking, ways of eating, ways of speaking, [laugh …] even verbal expressions and gestures, […] ways of dressing, [… etc.]. I think my way of life now is more of a mosaic […] like a *courte-pointe* [a quilt]. It's the sowing of all the pieces together that make me whole.

It is interesting that Roslyn describes herself as a quilt, made piece by piece through her transnational life experiences, as a woman, a spouse, a mother, a development officer and teacher (among other occupational roles), as an expat, as a Westerner with dual citizenship (in Europe and North America), etc. She explained that through all her various roles, the realities imparted by local cultural and structural conditions were always omnipresent, producing situations that forced her to develop new attitudes, specific skills, contextual knowledge, etc. applicable to everything from the way she managed her household, to the way she negotiated a contract, from the way she bought products/produce, to the ways in which she raised each one of her children and cared for

her spousal relationship, etc. She conceded that there isn't a magic recipe to adaptation and that much depends on how a person chooses to make sense of his/her experiences.

> Interviewer: So why do you think that some expats develop multicultural or transnational identities, and others with similar trajectories remain really 'home grown' despite living abroad for large portions of their life?
> Roslyn: mmmh… […] I think it depends on what is important to you. […] I am both… Part of me is absolutely defined by the phases of my life that I've lived abroad, and part of me is still … shaped… hum… rooted in my upbringing and the values that my parents instilled in me. I am not sure how I could be one or the other… I am both… [Pause] I think for me it was my need to experience genuine relationships with people of different cultures, to find a way to belong no matter where I was, and then … also… my need to pass onto my kids the values and traditions that we grew up with. So both are important to me […].

Roslyn's testimony reveals how she found a balance between her need to nurture belonging within host country cultures, while maintaining her attachment to her Western heritage. Such negotiations are part and parcel of Roslyn's process of self-actualization, whereby the conscious manifestation of 'what is important to her' served as a catalyst in nurturing overlapping cultural sensibilities. As such, consecutive relocations over a long period of time provided the conditions for Roslyn to develop a transnational and trans-cultural identity. Roslyn's reflexive practices made her aware of her (inter)subjective needs/priorities, and how to proactively satisfy them. From this vantage point, Roslyn's habitus evolved following the rhythms of her transience, indeed, like a quilt sewn piece by piece, with the passing of life-changing realizations, encounters and experiences.

7.4-. The case of Ronald: From reflexive adaptation to self-actualization

As discussed, reflexivity and adaptability are dispositions that are relatively developed from one individual to another. While adaptability denotes the ability to adjust

in various ways, reflexivity is the propensity to make sense of, interpret and consider the meanings and implications of our inter-subjective experiences. Though, as in the case of Ronald, it seems that reflexivity, and the subjective ways in which some expatriates analyze/apprehend their cross-cultural mistakes/conflicts, may spur particular existential insights, which substantiate forms of critical self-assessment and in some cases, a willingness to adjust related attitudes. Expats who experience a long-term sojourn in a foreign cultural context, like those who make Vietnam their permanent residence, may find themselves in such a position; whereby they may encounter cross-cultural dissonance within an 'us' vs. 'them' dynamic, and with a little well-placed reflexivity, come to the realization that they could 'work on themselves', to revisit and own up to the fact that they may have acted inappropriately. In this case, it is Ronald's reflexive practices that prompted new forms of understanding, which simultaneously with feelings of regret, brought on a willingness to 'work on himself'.

> Ronald [European, permanent resident in Vietnam]: I made quite a few mistakes in the first few years [of living in Vietnam]. When I look back there were times when I was arrogant and thought I knew it all…

Here, Ronald speaks of his engagement in retrospective introspection, which allows him to "look back" and "look in," in order to review his attitude. This served as a catalyst towards the realization of adaptation imperatives. Ronald's willingness to articulate self-criticisms helped him take ownership of the cross-cultural tensions he was producing. With sustained and conscious efforts, social actors can modify their behaviors, transform old modes of reaction and adopt new dispositions that are more culturally appropriate,

though the first step for Ronald was accepting that he was wrong, and that his attitude along with his assumptions needed to be reviewed.

> Ronald: There is this one moment, when I argued with a Vietnamese [… and] I regret getting into the thick of things with him… he took offense, but also I made a factual mistake and when all was said and done, he was right, and I was wrong, and with my over-assurance I made a fool of myself. I felt bad for days until I had a chance to say sorry to him. … It felt as if I let myself down too. I let some of my assumptions guide our argument. … And with more insight into the culture over time, I came to understand that how I reacted was like 'I lost face'… it's [what] Vietnamese try to avoid at all cost. It takes a while to get our tempers under control; I think it must've taken me two or three years before I literally stopped getting flustered.

Ronald refers to one particular incident, one conflict, where his disposition to "argue with a hot head" generated regrets and a sense of shame in hindsight, thereby prompting him to realize the importance of adjusting his attitude. He was able to compare his own behavior to local norms and understand the inappropriateness of his disposition, denoting his inter-subjective involvement and reflexive propensity. In turn, he made a conscious effort to modify particular dispositions and in time, achieve substantive attitudinal shifts.

> Interviewer: So changing your attitude at that level was an important dimension of your adaptation process?
> Ronald: Yes … that's right. [Pause] But you first have to be self conscious, … you have to worry about whether you did the right thing or not, and you need close Vietnamese friends to tell you honestly what you did wrong and why… From that point you can start working on yourself… because in fact, the main problem is with us, the way we think, the way we do things… we barge in as if we have the perfect solution for everything, as if our knowledge is a universal truth… we even assume that what matters to us, is the same thing that should matter to them… in so many ways, I had to learn to bite my tongue and change my way of speaking, my tone first, then the form, changing a statement into a question…

This is a complex portion of Ronald's narratives; it points to Ronald's self-awareness, which he views as a prerequisite for self-assessment. He also identifies his reliance on his

local social capital, in order to obtain feedback on his behavior and on local cultural norms. This is where self- and social reflexivity converge. His reflexive practices, and the subjective experience of emotions such as regret, served as underlying motivations to 'work on himself', to be pro-active in changing his modes of thought and action, denoting agency in self-actualization. With an understanding of what many expatriates 'do wrong', he goes on to explain that he, like other expats, based his former attitude on a series of assumptions (in the realm of doxa), which are flawed or inappropriate in the Vietnamese receiving context. Finally he provides an example of an attitude shift, which he felt was necessary to better communicate with host country nationals.

Ronald's experience in Vietnam allowed him to put into question not just his own dispositions but also the way expatriates in general are often inclined to rely on assumptions (the belief in "universal truths") that have little relevance in the Vietnamese cultural context. While relying on Vietnamese friends to provide feedback on his behavior, he explained that cross-cultural awareness prompts greater conscientiousness in practice.

> Interviewer: […] can you give me an example?
> Ronald: […] when I was director of [a hospitality establishment] I use to be very authoritative. I used to boss people left and right. If my staff didn't do what I asked properly I was confrontational telling them that what they had done was not up to standard. I didn't even realize that I was isolated. I was on my high horses so to speak. My then girlfriend told me I should be softer… in a way, more gracious… so instead of saying 'That's wrong', 'No not like that' or 'that's not what I asked'… I started saying 'If you don't mind, this can still be improved, can you see?' and then tell them my expectation… and I realized that I might have to repeat my expectations many times, but I can do it nicely… [Pause] or instead of being so direct about those things that 'don't make sense to me', I started asking 'do you mind telling me why this was done this way? […] Sometimes they have their reasons and we are just unaware of them…

Through experiences, a series of errors or blockages, Ronald came to realize that interpersonal relationships, even at work, could be tackled with greater cross-cultural sensitivity. Changing how he said certain things, and modifying his patterns of reaction and his mode of interaction were part and parcel of his cross-cultural adaptation process. As a foreign manager with Vietnamese employees, he perceived himself, in hindsight, as "isolated" as if his authoritarian approach also contributed to barriers in the establishment of productive and cooperative relations with his staff.

> Interviewer: ok, so you made behavioral adjustments, do you think that changed who you are, your identity on the long run?
> Ronald: […] I think it's a snowball effect that changes you… Once I became more aware of how I communicate with Vietnamese and getting my temper under control, I started doing it in life in general. I think that made me more likeable, so eventually I was able to develop a good camaraderie with some of my staff. Then I moved to another job, and collaboration came easier than before… and the more you collaborate [cross-culturally], the more you become familiar with their way of doing things, and eventually there's a cross over, they start doing things the way you would and you start thinking the way they would… Now for sure, I'm not the same person I was 8 years ago when I arrived. […]

The "snowball effect" that Ronald is referring to, relates to the formation of habit, to processes of (re)socialization that lead to the progressive internalization of new and different ways of being/acting/thinking as part of habitus. It is as if conscious efforts to shift one's attitude in a foreign cultural context can contribute to a secondary socialization process, a phase whereby expatriates have the chance to develop new sets of social skills and competencies, which will eventually be integrated and normalized as modus operandi. The realization that Ronald is not the same person as he was 8 years

ago, only confirms that expatriation and progressive insertion into a receiving society can prompt significant self-transformations that will in turn inflect one's concept of self.

> Interviewer: In what ways do you feel you've changed? Say in terms of characteristics…
> Ronald: Oh there's a world of difference… I am more relaxed, … more social and less bossy, … so much more patient with everyone, … less direct, and less forward… I listen a lot more to what other people have to say…and… mmh… I think I take less for granted especially with my expectations…

Attitudinal shift that are sustained through conscious efforts are thus likely to affect the character and personality of a social actors over time. It is interesting that one of the recurring dimensions of self-transformation, which is brought forth by expatriate and cross-cultural adaptation, revolves around a reassessment of assumptions and expectations at the level of doxa. "Taking less for granted" is a theme that was consistently addressed by those interview respondents who had made conscious efforts to readjust their expectations. And it means that Ronald has been able to 'recognize' and 'bracket' some of his basic assumptions, while developing a better understanding of local norms, values and standards. His experience of cross-cultural dissonance and conflict helped him recognize that some of his 'doxic knowledge' had to be reconsidered, and even replaced.

> Ronald: I even adopted […] Vietnamese ways…
> Interviewer: like what?
> Ronald: Huh… well since I've been here I lost [a parent …] and I had a hard time with the loss because it was so sudden. So I use our altar at work to make offerings and give homage, I do it everyday and it brings me a sense of calm and it makes me feel connected [to my parent]. […]

Having experienced a loss, Ronald took up the Vietnamese practice of ancestor worship to find a measure of peace and a sense of connection to his deceased parent. It is

particularly interesting that Ronald chose to adopt a Vietnamese tradition to deal with his grief, as it speaks to his appropriation of the symbolism that is attached to this practice. It seems that for Ronald, living in Vietnam has served as a secondary socialization process, whereby the enhancement of his cross-cultural awareness overtime allowed him to adopt and develop more appropriate dispositions, not only to promote cooperation and understanding with host country nationals, but also to deal with personal life experiences.

The case of Ronald established a clear link between reflexivity, adaptation and cross-cultural sensitivity. His process of adaptation speaks implicitly about 'becoming Other', whereby his social integration is dependent, not only on his own habituation to local structural and cultural conditions, but to his own propensity to reproduce them as a genuine second nature. And in this process of 're-socialization', Ronald seemed to understand that both conscious efforts and habit have a part to play.

> Interviewer: So do you feel that you've changed more or less consciously or unconsciously?
> Ronald: Definitely both… I mean it depends… for certain thing I needed to really make an effort, think about it, catch myself in the moment sort of thing, […] until eventually it became second nature… But for others, it came naturally, with habit and repetition.

In Ronald's case, targeted behavioral adjustments and his attitudinal adaptation were driven in part by his self and social reflexivity, prompting pro-active effort, which turned to habit, through repetition. Overtime this modulated some of his dispositions. In hindsight, Ronald was able to identify clear examples of personal changes, which lead to the transformation of aspects of his character and personality. Also, it is specifically in response to conditions in the Vietnamese context that Ronald was able to recognize some of his mistakes, thus prompting him to address his ineptitudes, and motivating him to

make adjustments that would in turn, after 8 years of residency in Vietnam, be integrated as "force of habit". In substantively adapting his behavior and in shifting some key sets of attitudes, Ronald also changed how Others related to him, which increased his social capital, and in some ways, modified his social position from an outsider to an 'honorary member' of the receiving society. Overtime, locals, witnessing his adeptness in the Vietnamese cultural context would tell him "you are like Vietnamese" and he reported "feeling proud and honored" to be accepted in that way.

There is no question that Ronald developed Vietnamese sensibilities, notably in terms of communication practices, some of his mannerisms, his appropriation of a form of cult to ancestors, etc. Some of these acquired sensibilities were developed consciously, while others were developed through habit or recursive experience/practice. While change can often be the product of un/sub-conscious processes, in Ronald's case, conscious and conscientious efforts were exerted to adjust his patterns of practice. The importance of reflexivity and of the conscious adoption of new ways of being/acting/thinking is pivotal in the process of self-actualization. If we accept that habitus has a transformative potential, then we must also distinguish that this potential is manifest through latent transformative processes (new practices that are internalized un/sub-consciously), and explicit ones (new practices that are consciously adopted, requiring introspection as well as sustained effort). Whereas the former are driven by adaptability alone, the latter are contingent on reflexive adaptation.

Living in Vietnam and adapting to the host culture has been a life changing experience for Ronald, though his experience is contingent on the fact that he has made

Vietnam his home, wishing to remain there permanently. The adaptation imperatives incumbent to this choice underpin both the necessity to become familiar with the host country culture, and to accept and even adopt Vietnamese ways of being/acting/thinking.

7.5-. The case of Scott: Adaptation, life crises and new beginnings

As I strived to demonstrate, reflexivity can, in different circumstances, produce in-depth transformations in the individual. Habitus is probably never completely reconfigured, though multiple dispositions can be transformed 'syncretically'. While for most expatriates these transformations might affect only a few sets of dispositions, so that self actualization works in part as a conciliation between the foundation of their former (original) cultural socialization, and the attitudinal modalities they have adopted/developed in new cultural contexts over time. Meanwhile, few expatriates are capable or willing to 'go native', that is to seek to detach themselves from the expatriate community, to reject much of their national cultural upbringing, and actively adopt the ways of the host country culture. In this regard, only one narrative from the 39 interviews I conducted stood out, pointing to a thorough transformation, encompassing an in-depth self-redefinition, a re-articulation of the projected self, as well as worldview reconfiguration. The case of Scott is particular in that difficulties in his life circumstances prompted him to reconsider the "very meaning of his life."

> Scott [European, permanent resident]: Before … when I came here, it was all about the money and living the life. I was divorced [...]. I was alone [… and] I'm not sure I really cared about anyone. […] It was me, myself and I… how much money I could make, how much I could spend on drinking, eating and fucking… [Pause] I'm ashamed you know […].
> Interviewer: So how did Vietnam change you?

> Scott: Well, I am not sure it's only Vietnam but it's the whole circumstances of my life…

In hindsight, Scott admits that upon arrival his practices as an expatriate were centered on self-indulgent desires, which coincided with a neo-colonial rapport to the receiving context, whereby economic opportunities, leisure time and sex as booty were entitlements to be claimed. Scott's life circumstances changed, and with the experience of a trauma, he had to reassess his priorities, as well as his social position and dispositions.

> Scott: [… Respondent takes a deep breath like a sigh] After moving here, I started a business with a Vietnamese guy. […] I didn't know what I was doing and I wasn't careful enough… […Anyway, we eventually] had a falling out. He went behind my back and dissolved the company. I mean from one day to another I went from having money to having pretty much nothing… and there was nothing I could do…

Scott explained that his behavior had not been conducive to making friends he could depend on for help. That this was "a hard lesson to learn!" He was isolated and had nowhere to turn. He resisted going back to Europe because he felt he had nothing there, no one that he considered family. In a last ditch attempt to stay in Vietnam, he convinced a Vietnamese acquaintance to give him a chance.

> Scott: Seriously, I had nothing to offer… only my promise that I wouldn't let him down… I was a mess! [… So this older man] took me under his wing, taught me Vietnamese, got me working as a cook in his small family restaurant. […] For a long time I slept on a folding bed in the hallway of the house […But eventually] his family became my family […].

Scott explained that for the first time in his life, he learned what it was like to be part of a family unit. He was humbled by the generosity of his hosts, for letting him take part in their family life indefinitely. After loosing much of his money and assets, and with the realization that he had little social and cultural capital, his social position changed,

forcing him to develop a relationship of dependence with Vietnamese folk, and in the same time deconstruct the sense of entitlement he had nurtured until then.

> Scott: The way Vietnamese families are setup is really tight. I mean every one has a place and everyone faces the expectations of the others. The sense of duty is strong. Sometimes it's difficult because you just want a little bit of room, a little bit of freedom… I felt like that at first… [Pause] but you can't just turn off your accountability to them… They support you. You support them. They'll have an opinion about everything you do and it's just because they care.

The portion of Scott's testimony reveals that while he was being assimilated into a Vietnamese family, his values shifted as he came to understand and accept the structural forces that modulated his new life. He went from expecting and desiring space, independence and freedom, to understanding the core sentiment of genuine family involvement, and the incumbent forms of mutual accountability that family dynamics produce. Scott readily acknowledges that this changed his life, and that in turn, he rejected his Western past and adopted Vietnam, as Vietnamese had 'adopted' him of sorts.

> Interviewer: Do you think that this experience made you less European?
> Scott: Well, I'm not really European anymore. I don't even see myself as that… Everything that has meaning in my life today was made here. My wife, my kids, my Vietnamese family [and friends…] everything I'm attached to is here… my people, my work, my little routine…
> Interviewer: So you've gone native? [giggle]
> Scott: You can say that… [smile]
> Interviewer: Do you miss anything about your old life?
> Scott: no… not really… that's what it is… an old life. The jetset expat asshole that I was, is dead… my [Vietnamese] family knows that. I am a new person. […]

Scott's transformation speaks to an in-depth process of self re-definition that denotes an extreme form of self-actualization. Surely some of his character traits and emotive

dispositions remain rooted in his 'long-gone' past, though in fundamental ways, his cross-cultural assimilation is almost total.

His detachment from his European upbringing was made possible by the fact that he had no one to depend on in Europe at the time of his life crisis. He had been estranged from his family and ex-wife, and had closed the door on his past. Conversely, his attachment to Vietnam was 'made there', in his time of need, at a moment when he had life lessons to learn, choices to make regarding his future, and an opportunity to be 'reborn'… to redefine his values, his habits, the parameters of his life and of his social relationships. The role of trauma in Scott's story cannot be overstated, as it served as a catalyst for a form of self-reflexivity that spurred a new motivation to get his 'life on track'. In turn he grew roots:

> Interviewer: Can you tell me what was going through your mind when you were going through this life change?
> Scott: mmh… well… I don't know… some days I questioned my choice…. […] Other days it felt like I could not belong anywhere else… the longer I stayed the harder it was to leave, […] until one day I just could not imagine having to leave […].

Scott went through a thorough process of acculturation, with ups and downs, embedded in moments of self-doubt, and a growing sense of security and certainty revolving around his growing sense of belonging. Here, recursiveness also plays a part in Scott's habituation process, and thus, in the reconfiguration of his habitus. Scott views his 'former self' as dead, confirming that his way of life, his values and his priorities have all changed, along with the 'adoption' of a Vietnamese lifestyle. Although he is still privileged by his whiteness and European origins, as per his ascribed status within the receiving context, his experience of trauma, when he 'lost almost everything' allowed

him to embody a humility that until then had been inaccessible to him as a privileged Westerner in Vietnam.

The process of being integrated into a Vietnamese family unit in this way, speaks of a rare and relatively unique experience, denoting a special set of circumstances, which allowed Scott to 're-evaluate' his self-concept and to work on what he was projecting as a foreigner in Vietnam, which substantiated a thorough overturn of his worldview.

> As new learning occurs, deculturation or unlearning of at least some of the old cultural elements has to occur, at least in the sense that new responses are adopted in situations that previously would have evoked old ones. [There is]''No construction without destruction,'' in the words of Burke (1974). The act of acquiring something new is the suspending and, over a prolonged period, even losing some of the old habits at least temporarily. This interplay of acculturation and deculturation underlies the psychological evolution individuals undergo—from changes in ''surface'' areas such as outwardly expressive behaviors such as choices of music, food, and dress, to deeper-level changes in social role-related behaviors and fundamental values. (Kim, 2012: 87)

In this process of acculturation-deculturation, Scott eventually rejected the West, 'opting out' of his European identity. While he was being integrated into a Vietnamese family, he also made the choice to distance himself from the expat community, expressing a feeling of disconnection in regards to the 'expat lifestyle' he once embodied: "I know a few long-term expats, business contacts mainly, but I don't really relate to them or their lifestyle." Scott's experience corroborates the fact that under certain circumstances the habitus can be substantially reconfigured, entailing profound changes in his sense of belonging. Scott's case is particular because the experience of a personal crisis at any point in someone's life can become a key stepping stone in a process of self-transformation. Experiencing such a crisis in a foreign cultural context and in a situation

of personal isolation may serve as an existential epiphany, a paroxysmal moment of self- and social reflexivity, leading to a thorough lifestyle overhaul, and to the adoption of new ways of being/acting/thinking. Similar life-changing processes might be experienced by recovering drug addicts or alcoholics, by rehabilitated prisoners/criminals, or by religious converts because it speaks to social actors' active engagement in 'taking control' of their life, in 'choosing a path' 'and in 'changing their life around'. Scott's experience is however distinct because his location, along with his transnational and cross-cultural experiences provided an opportunity for a complete detachment from his former cultural upbringing.

Scott's openness to Vietnamese ways came, perhaps, from having few other choices at the time of the crisis. Though in the long run, it is the consistent support and generosity of his Vietnamese family that helped him resolutely reject his old dispositions. In fact, it is the reliable presence and influence of his 'adoptive' Vietnamese family that enabled Scott to 'become Other', to inter-subjectively transpose and internalize the cultural frame of reference of host-country nationals and of this family's located structure/culture. Knowing that Scott's adaptation was configured as a resocialization process entailing European deculturation and Vietnamese enculturation, I was curious about how he articulated his self-actualization.

> Interviewer: So in hindsight, how do you feel you've changed? I mean your character or aspects of your personality?
> Scott: […] Humility is a big thing for me, I think because too many Westerners come here and act like they own this place, and I was one of them at first. […] There's a lot that we can do to control our fate, but a lot is out of our control, and ultimately our fate might depend on others, it was so for me… [pause] and I was so arrogant! Overconfident … [pause] I learned to be humble. My Vietnamese family taught me how important it

> is… […] Loyalty is another… it works a little like Karma. If you give your loyalty you will receive some back… I wasn't particularly loyal in the past. I made mistakes because I was selfish and self-serving. Narcissism came and bit me in the ass. I had no one to trust and no one really trusted me either […]. I had to learn that no one will stand by me if I can't be loyal to those who support me. […] I had to become a better man […].

This is another complex segment of Scott's narratives. Humility and loyalty are not just character traits he developed, they are values and virtues he adopted and cultivated (perhaps emanating from life lessons), and which fall in line with traditional Vietnamese morals. Adjacently, his discourse about fate, speaks to a typical set of Vietnamese values (taken up by both Confucian and Buddhist philosophies –albeit in different ways) regarding the consequences of actions/choices and their trickle-down effects on destiny. As such, this might well be a sign that Scott has internalized such Vietnamese values and beliefs overtime.

Finally the idea of 'becoming a better man' can also be linked to traditional Vietnamese philosophies, which stress the importance of righteousness and virtuousness in conduct. As such, Scott's narrative provides evidence that his self-actualization process has entailed the development of new personality traits and values in line with those of Vietnamese culture. He demonstrates accountability for his old ways of being, but more importantly, in this process, Scott is aware that he has "learned" to be different; hence the role of reflexive learning in Scott's motivation to 'become a better man'. This impulse can also be conceived as an existential impetus in his process of self-transformation. Ultimately, Scott achieved profound self-transformations because his life circumstances, and the feedback he received from his adoptive Vietnamese family,

pushed him towards introspection. In this pursuit, he explained that he turned to Buddhism for guidance. It seems that through Buddhist teachings, he was able to develop and nurture greater reflexivity and that this was pivotal in his process of self-actualization.

7.6-. Conclusions

The four case studies discussed previously were chosen to highlight distinct processes of self-actualization. In each case, reflexivity served as a key dimension of conscious self-evaluation and self-transformation. While expatriation and culture contact may provide impetuses for metamorphosis, the main catalyst for the re-evaluation of doxa and in-depth attitudinal adjustments seems to have roots in subjective experiences, personal motivations that are informed by emotional impulses, aversions, needs, regrets, shame, humility, etc. In fact, in all four cases subjective experiences could be linked to 'located' motivations, which in turn impelled forms of adaptation that incurred direct and/or indirect impacts on dimensions of their habitus.

In Surrey's case, it was a feeling of alienation, which she attributed to Western materialistic individualism, and a feeling that she wasn't home in her homeland. With the experience of rapid, successive expatriations under her belt, she embraced the idea of self-growth, using expatriation as an opportunity to tweak her character according to selected life lessons, which she translated into a 'self-project'. It was her critical insight into what people in the West tend to take for granted that sparked her commitment to self-improvement and her appreciation of living out of her comfort zone. As such she

defined herself as "in becoming" – a work in progress, which she consciously fashioned in light of her experiences along the way.

In Roslyn's case, successive but longer-term expatriations served as a defining axis of her identity, as she readily cultivated cross-cultural awareness through empathetic inter-subjective insights, while seeking a genuine connection with host country nationals. Her need to find a way to belong while living abroad, served as a catalyst for the bracketing of her doxic knowledge, while her ability to engage inter-subjectively with people across cultures allowed her to become more flexible and accepting of differences. Concomitantly, she also acknowledged her nurtured attachments to her Western cultures of belonging, arguing that she has found ways to integrate foreign ways of doing/acting/thinking, whilst also fostering and reproducing some of the cultural forms that characterized her upbringing. She realized that she felt the need to reproduce familiar scripts. Her self-actualization entailed trans-cultural syncretism, which was translated into a way of life that she described as a mosaic.

In Ronald's case, it was the realization of his own cross-cultural faux pas that acted as a catalyst for retrospective introspection and feelings of regret that spurred his willingness to work on key aspects of his habitus. With insights into his cross-cultural mistakes, which were relevant specifically to his rapport with Vietnamese nationals, he was able to pro-actively target some of his dispositions and develop new patterns of interaction. Over time, with recursiveness or the repetition of practice, his efforts turned to habits, and his once new attitudes, ultimately became second nature. Ronald also rehashed the problem of "taking things for granted," which he admitted tended to be

problematic considering the problem of assumptions. He acknowledged that some of his self-transformations required sustained efforts, notably in identifying and rejecting irrelevant assumptions, while other adjustments came more naturally. He also conceded that understanding his mistakes, lead to a snowball effect that enhanced his cross-cultural awareness, along with his propensity towards reflexive introspection, and his willingness to engage in more in-depth forms of adaptation. His sustained efforts in trying to modulate his behaviors in line with Vietnamese expectations, effectively modulated his rapport to host country nationals. This, along with the sudden loss of a parent (which served as a traumatic experience), prompted him to endorse Vietnamese practices and nurture a host of Vietnamese sensibilities, thereby producing ideal conditions for Ronald's experience of expatriation to serve as a secondary cultural socialization.

Finally, Scott's case also highlights the pivotal influence of subjective experience in the way social actors adapt to life abroad. Scott admitted to having lived a "typical expat life" (as he had lived it), in a privileged bubble, disconnected from the values that are important in Vietnamese society. After experiencing a trauma, Scott found 'a new home' as part of a Vietnamese family. He learned to speak Vietnamese and in time, internalized new ways of thinking and acting, and 'losing' or 'bracketing' his old European identity. Scott owns up to "having gone native," and insists that it was a choice to reject his European ways in exchange for Vietnamese ones. Scott's case reflects the most thorough self-transformation I documented, one that was impelled by the need to give meaning to his life. Thanks to important insights about the importance of humility and loyalty, he invested efforts in 'unlearning' some of his old dispositions/assumptions.

Ultimately, this was conducive to fostering meaningful social bonds with his 'adoptive' Vietnamese family. In time, he progressively distanced himself from the expat community and surrounded himself with his own Vietnamese family. Scott's process of self-actualization was prompted by trauma, though it was enabled by his willingness to depend on a helping hand that would ultimately support him through his self-transformations. A difficult situation served as an epiphany, allowing him to construct a new reality, one that came to be inspired by traditional Vietnamese values and Buddhist philosophies. Scott's self-actualization process underscores a new beginning, with a clear rupture to his past ways.

In each case, social actors oriented their reflexivity towards contextually relevant needs, feelings and experiences. This reifies the link between subjectivity and reflexive practice, notably as it pertains to expatriate and cross-cultural adaptation/adjustment, and self-actualization. Respondents' reflexive practices speak to their socio-cultural insights, their self-awareness, and their propensity to identify and analyze their underlying needs and desires, or their mistakes and regrets. Moreover, in all four cases, reflexive practices were linked to existential insights, denoting the respondents' awareness of, and preoccupation with, the embodiment of self-chosen values, morals and models of character, as a way to ensure their life has a particular meaning. Also, in each case, respondents demonstrated relative adaptability; not only in terms of their willingness to change, but also in terms of the way they chose to do so.

Indeed, habitus has a transformative potential despite its enduring character. This potential may be developed and nurtured in different ways, though it seems that self-

actualization requires actors to engage in reflexive practices, denoting their self-awareness and openness to change/difference. Indeed, respondents' testimonies confirm that expatriates' preferences, attitudes and values may evolve through resolute efforts, but also through habituation and recursive practice. Whether investing conscious efforts in attitudinal adjustments or not, it seems that recursive, habit-forming practice play a role in the internalization of new ways of being/acting/thinking, so that overtime, new attitudes might become second nature.

Finally, it is also imperative to highlight key linkages between habitus, and practice on one hand, and lifestyle choices and identity correlates on the other. Respondents' tended to link "who they are" (the objectivate 'Me') to the subjective implications of what they do, what they care for, how they feel, what they need, what they like or dislike, where they have been, how they live, what they believe in, what they stand for, how they behave, how they relate to Others, etc. They also consistently referred to their lifestyles choices as markers of their self-concept. So that prolonged and sustained changes in their lifestyle, progressively altered their concept of self. In hindsight, respondents offered a clear understanding of how they had changed overtime, explaining in detail how some of their attitudes, preferences, values and sensibilities, etc. had evolved as a consequence of expatriation and the subjective challenges they faced as expats. The negotiation of their identities is therefore modulated by their life experiences, and intricately textured through their lifestyle choices overtime. While many dispositions, or dimensions of habitus, are "un/sub-consciously internalized" through socialization processes, narratives suggest that social actors are capable of willfully engaging in

secondary socialization processes that demand a bracketing of their doxa (the suspension of their assumptions and the re-evaluation of what they take for granted) and the rejection or modification of old ways of being/acting/thinking. Hence, if expats' lifestyle choices reflect core dimensions of their identities, and if the changes they embrace offer a glimpse into their process of self actualization, then sustained changes in their modes of practice, including underlying epiphanies/realizations, are bound to affect the configuration of habitus, which reifies its transformative potential.

CONCLUSION

This research established key connections between the process of adaptation and habitus. It corroborates the idea that habitus is durable and often inclined towards practice of reproduction. In fact, this represents one of the rare attempts to-date to extrapolate Bourdieu's theory of practice (beyond just a few concepts) and apply its general principles to the phenomenology of expatriate and cross-cultural adaptation. At this level of analysis, contentions were raised about how to speak of, and operationalize difference in order to account for positionality and dispositions across fields. The conceptualization of markers of differentiation (as socially constructed) and factors of distinction (as methodological indicators of the former) was discussed at length to ensure coherence with a post-structural-constructivist approach. Since Bourdieu's work tends to focus on the impact of structural forces on the configuration of habitus and on the articulation of practice, additional considerations on subjectivity were central to enhancing the analysis, notably to highlight how relative social positions and dispositions (dimensions of habitus) affect the interpretation of experiences, whereby personalized narratives come to reflect located frustrations, desires, needs, regrets, anxieties, etc., and the efforts exerted in 'making sense' (Ortner, 2005) of unfamiliar structural and cultural conditions. As such, enhancements were also proposed to better account for the subjective genesis of habitus (based on socialization theory and Berger and Luckmann's work on the construction of social reality), to determine how knowledge and agency relate to the negotiation of

relative social positions, dispositional propensities, and practice, and how habitus can be reconciled with the notion of identity.

Results and analytical discussions demonstrate that Western expatriates' tendency to reproduce familiar scripts inscribed in pervasive constructs of class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality and national culture, may reify postcolonial power dynamics with host country nationals. Conclusions suggest however that adaptation is modulated by subjective experiences that emerge from the negotiation of relative positionality and dispositional propensities within the frame of field-specific structural and cultural conditions. This project advances the scholarship of expat studies by presenting inferences on class, race/ethnicity, nationality and origins, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, and parenting, across multiple fields, including the general social/public context of the receiving society, local expat communities, the dating scene, the household, and the family, among others. The scope of this study confirms that markers of differentiation intersect with compounding effects on expatriates' subjective experiences and on adaptive practices.

This research also corroborates the notion that habitus is transformative and subject to modifications overtime, which are determined in part by subjective processes such as reflexive practices, existential insights, emotional motivations, knowledge acquisition (learning) and critical agency (willingness and ability to bracket some aspects of doxa). Narratives detailing life stories reveal the cumulative effects of adaptation practices on habitus, whereby substantive transformations at the level of key dispositions may influence the articulation of the self. Some respondents demonstrated a deep

engagement in the (trans)formation of the self, to achieve personal growth, trans-cultural syncretism, cross-cultural learning and integration, as forms of self-actualization. In time, expatriate and cross-cultural adaptation/adjustment turns to habituation, as part of a resocialization process that is responsive to the specific circumstances of an actor's transnational social reality. In specific cases, narrative analysis demonstrated that reflexivity informs conscious forms of self-evaluation, some of which were rooted in the development of cross-cultural inter-subjectivity. While expatriation and culture contact might provide an impetus for metamorphosis, the major catalyst for the bracketing of doxa and in-depth attitudinal shifts seemed to be rooted in subjective experiences and emotional motivations, such as urges to fulfill personal needs, specific aversions, desires, fears, regrets, and anxieties. By extension, adaptation as self-actualization transcends the imperatives of cross-cultural adjustment; rather it encompasses a consistent and long-term personal investment in self-realization.

So despite its enduring character, habitus has a transformative potential, which can be developed, with conscious reflexive and adaptive efforts, but also through habit-forming practices, so that overtime, new attitudes might become second nature. There is therefore a fundamental relationship between expatriation (cultural relocation and *dépaysement*) and habitus transformations, founded in part in the complementary roles of reflexivity and adaptability, as dispositions that influence both the depth and extent of such transformations. Inductive conclusions also confirm the crucial influence of subjective needs, feelings and experience, notably as motivations for the adaptive practices of social actors, of which only some might lead, through recursiveness, to

habitus transformation and conscious self-actualization. Adaptation is a key theme in expat studies, and this research makes headway by theorizing how differentiation can affect the adaptation process, using a phenomenological application of Bourdieu's conceptual and theoretical proposition.

Bourdieu's focus on objective structural forces is regularly mistaken for a disregard for the subjective. Though, habitus and the problematic of relative social positioning, however under-theorized from the point of view of alternate factors of distinction (beyond class and related structural inequalities), are at the center of his understanding of the subjective. Despite his acknowledgement of the importance of phenomenology (Bourdieu, 2002b), his reading of 'located experience' has not paid sufficient attention to the processes by which social actors personalize their experience, infusing their perceptions, interpretations and representations with the baggage of their own emotions, assumptions, and insights. As such, my goal was to produce legitimate advancements to his conceptual and theoretical propositions while verifying their applicability to the 'problem' of expatriate and cross-cultural adaptation in unfamiliar receiving contexts. In doing so, I also wanted to show that post-structural phenomenology is not incompatible with Bourdieu's epistemological contributions.

The wide scope of this research also provided an opportunity to identify under-researched themes and prospective avenues for the scholarship on expat adaptation. For example, dynamics of inclusion and exclusion between different expat communities and the host society are not clearly or critically mapped out for many post-colonial developing countries. Studies on the cultural politics of whiteness have to be expanded to

include the subjective experiences of 'non-white' Western expats, and a more nuanced understanding of negotiations incurred by the relative privileges and disadvantages of skin color and intersecting categories of ascription (race/ethnicity, origin/nationality, class, gender, etc.). More research is also necessary on themes related to household relations and homemaking overseas, to continue to problematize the (re)production of (neo)colonial practices of Othering; to examine how cultural reproduction is embedded in daily practices (representation, performance/(re)enactment, consumption, routines, mannerisms, rules, division of labor, etc.); to highlight the diversity in lifestyles and gain a better understanding of quality of life standards and expectation; and, to reiterate the importance of considerations on intersecting markers of differentiation. Finally transnational sexual encounters/relations have not been thoroughly examined, particularly at the intersection of age, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, class and national origins. Expat parenting is another field which is under-researched and for which further study is warranted. A more in-depth understanding of expat parenting practices within different family configurations (uni- bi- or multi-cultural, inter-ethnic, mono-parental, dual-career, homemaking men, etc.) around the world could provide important insight into family adaptation dynamics. These constitute possible research avenue that would advance expat studies and the scholarship on transnational social life.

Expatriate and cross-cultural adaptation/adjustment is relevant to multiple areas of interest and practice surrounding life and work overseas. Practical applications of research on adaptation may be extrapolated to the field of transnational labor, focusing on international development workers, global HR management, transnational business,

diplomacy, philanthropy, military assignment and peacekeeping among others. It is also applicable to the field of education, focusing on international student exchanges/internships, student/faculty mobility, foreign student integration, international pedagogical development, transnational research and fieldwork, and cross-cultural training curricula. It may even be streamlined to reveal governance implications, ranging from residency administration, migrant integration programs, transnational political practices, and consular service development, among others. Beyond these, expatriate and cross-cultural adaptation/adjustment is a theme of increasing relevance, considering the growth and diversification of expatriate communities worldwide. The needs of expats are just as diverse as their located circumstances and targeted research can be useful in addressing the adaptive strategies of key cohorts, such as retirees, teachers, CEOs, children, medical professionals, humanitarian workers, etc.

Fundamentally, critical research on expatriate and cross-cultural adaptation/adjustment is also meant to tackle some of the tensions that exist between/amongst different groups of 'foreigners' and 'host-country' nationals, and to highlight the historical continuities of pervasive structural inequalities along with legacies of domination/exploitation. While this type of research may seek to enhance cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity, the stakes at hand also transcend cross-cultural relations. As expatriation is increasingly common and since it constitutes an important aspect of contemporary global mobility, expatriate adaptation research promotes a better understanding of the way people contend with the challenges of transnational dislocation and relocation. With a focus on attitudes and the negotiation of change/difference, expat

adaptation research offers insights on how/why some expats, more than others, may come to understand and potentially integrate different ways of doing/acting/thinking, and why others will prefer to repatriate and go back to a more familiar place, how/why some agents adapt so well that they experience culture shock when they are brought back 'home', or how agents develop and deploy forms of capital to meet their needs and fulfill their desires in unfamiliar structural/cultural contexts. This type of research reveals what kind of 'learning' leads to better quality of life, how cultural dissonance is perceived and interpreted, how cultural identities are reproduced and nurtured, and how transnational and trans-cultural identities are formed. It also reminds us that in-/out-group dynamics are played out through complex negotiations, many of which result in boundary maintenance and practices of Othering. With cultural globalization and unprecedented population movements worldwide, it is certain that the promise of expatriate and cross-cultural adaptation research lies in understanding how social actors can more easily develop doxic and habitus awareness, and how they can learn to bracket their assumptions in order to engage reflexively, not only in cross-cultural encounters/relations, but also in self-realization.

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Appendix A

SURVEY

Survey of Expatriate Population in Vietnam

Please make sure you have read and signed (or ticked for questionnaires in electronic formats) the consent form. If you did not receive the consent form, you should request an electronic copy by email at severineminot@hotmail.com. Your participation is voluntary. You will remain anonymous and the researcher guarantees confidentiality. The data will be coded and any information published will not allow anyone to trace an answer back to any specific respondent. You can skip any question you do not want to answer. The York University Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this research. This survey requires approximately 5 to 10 minutes of your time.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

N.B. Some form fields (shaded response areas) allow you to answer in more detail. Please skip questions that are not applicable to your situation.

1- Year of birth:

2- Male: ☐ // Female: ☐

3- Nationality/ies:

4- Your parents' origins:

5- Your ethnicity/race:

6- Country of birth:

7- Highest level of education completed:

8- Main location(s) of residence(s) since your childhood (countries and/or cities):

9- Time period residing in **Vietnam**: From to

If your time in Vietnam is irregular please explain:

10- **Cumulative time in Vietnam** in total (years and months):

11- Do you **regularly travel back and forth** between 2 + countries: Yes ☐ // No ☐

12- **Total** length of **time living in Southeast Asia** (years and months):

13- **Current location of residence in Vietnam** (city and district):

14- Location(s) of **other current residence(s) or property in Vietnam** (please specify the city/ies if applicable):

15- Location(s) of **other current residence(s) or property outside Vietnam** (please specify which country/ies if applicable):

16- Location(s) of **previous** residences in Vietnam (city/ies and districts):

17- Do you use a **permanent address in another country**: Yes ☐ // No ☐

18- Do you have **material assets** in other countries: Yes ☐ // No ☐

19- Do you (co-)**own property/real estate in other countries**: Yes ☐ // No ☐

20- Do you have one or more bank **account(s)** in a **Vietnamese bank**: Yes ☐ // No ☐

21- How important is **internet banking** for you:

Very ☐ // Somewhat ☐ // Not really ☐

22- **Marital status** (single, married/common law, separated/divorced, remarried):

23- **Currently** married or in a spousal relation with a Vietnamese: Yes ☐ // No ☐

24- **Previously** married or in spousal/steady relation(s) with Vietnamese:

Yes ☐ // No ☐

25- If single, you prefer to date:

Other Expats ☐ Vietnamese Nationals ☐ Either ☐ NA ☐

26- Your are: Gay/Lesbian ☐ // Straight (hetero) ☐ // Bisexual ☐

27- Do you have one or more child(ren) of your biological lineage: Yes ☐ // No ☐

28- Do you have one or more **adopted Vietnamese** child(ren):

Yes ☐ // No ☐ // Soon ☐

29- Do you have an **adopted child from another national/ethnic origin**:

Yes ☐ // No ☐

30- Do you live with at least one child **in Vietnam**:

Yes fulltime ☐ // Yes part-time ☐ // No ☐

31- Do you have children of any age **in Vietnam** who **do not live with you**:

Yes ☐ // No ☐

32- Do you have adult/**grown up children overseas**: Yes ☐ // No ☐

33- Do you have **children under** the age of **18 overseas**: Yes ☐ // No ☐

34- Do you **visit** family/friends **overseas**:

Yes Regularly ☐ // Not Often ☐ // No (Not yet) ☐

35- Have family and/or friends from overseas **visited you in Vietnam**:

Yes Regularly ☐ // Sometimes ☐ // No (Not yet) ☐

36- Are you a student (currently enrolled in an educational institution): Yes ☐ // No ☐

37- What is your **main (professional-work) occupation**:

38- What is your **secondary (professional-work) occupation** (if applicable):

39- Do you have:

A fulltime paid job ☐

A part-time job ☐

A part-time & a full-time job ☐

2 or more part-time jobs ☐

Full-time domestic/parenting duties ☐

Other:

40- Your **main work** is:

Permanent ☐ // Contractual ☐ // Freelance ☐ // Self-employed ☐

41- Do you have managerial responsibilities at work in Vietnam: Yes ☐ // No ☐

What kind of responsibilities:

42- Can you specify your main **sector(s) of work**:

43- What is the **title of your main position** at work:

44- Do you **work with** Vietnamese nationals:

Yes adults ☐ // Yes children/teens ☐ // No ☐

45- Do you **manage Vietnamese nationals** as your **main occupation**: Yes ☐ // No ☐

46- Do you **manage Vietnamese nationals** as your **secondary occupation**

Yes ☐ // No ☐

47- What are **some challenges in managing Vietnamese nationals**:

48- Do you **manage other foreign nationals** in any work context? Yes ☐ // No ☐

49- Do you have **employees** who work for you **in your home**: Yes ☐ // No ☐

50- If applicable, what kind of work/duties do these employees perform in your home:

51- Are your employees hired:

Fulltime ☐ // Regular-Part-time ☐ // Occasionally ☐ // NA ☐

52- Do you **work** for/with international employers/colleagues/clients: Yes ☐ // No ☐

53- Do you **volunteer**: Yes Regularly ☐ // Sometimes ☐ // No (Not Yet) ☐

54- Are you involved with **development/aid projects or program**s in Vietnam:

Yes Regularly ☐ // Sometimes ☐ // Not Really ☐ // Never ☐

55- In what capacity are you involved in development/aid:

56- Are you involved with **kindergarten, primary or secondary education**

Yes Regularly ☐ // Sometimes ☐ // Not Really ☐ // Never ☐

57- In what capacity are you involved in Children's education:

58- Are you involved with **university education** (private or public)

Yes Regularly ☐ // Sometimes ☐ // Not Really ☐ // Never ☐

59- In what capacity are you involved in university education:

60- Are you involved with **language education**

Yes Regularly ☐ // Sometimes ☐ // Not Really ☐ // Never ☐

61- In what capacity are you involved in language education:

62- Are you in **direct contact** with **Vietnamese government officials**/authorities

Yes Regularly ☐ // Sometimes ☐ // Not Really ☐ // Never ☐

63- Do you **currently** (co-)own a business in Vietnam: Yes ☐ // No ☐

64- Do you **currently** (co-)own a business outside Vietnam: Yes ☐ // No ☐

65- **Have you ever** (co-)owned a business in Vietnam: Yes ☐ // No ☐

66- You **speak Vietnamese**:

Very well ☐ // Well ☐ // A Little ☐ // Barely ☐ // Not at all ☐

67- Are you part of **local clubs or associations**? Yes ☐ // No ☐

68- What are your **main hobbies or social activities**:

69- Who and where do you find your greatest **sources of support and help in Vietnam**

(Check any of the options that represent significant sources of support and/or specify others)

Vietnamese friends/family ☐

Other expatriates ☐

Local organizations & their members ☐

Through your work and/or the work of your spouse ☐

Other (please specify):

70- Do you maintain strong and **supportive relationships with friends and family overseas**: Yes absolutely ☐ // Yes somewhat ☐ // Not really ☐ // Not at all ☐

71- **How often do you contact your friends/family overseas** for a significant conversation

Very often ☐ // Regularly ☐ // Once in a while ☐ // Rarely ☐ // Never ☐

72- **Do you use social networking websites** (Facebook, MySpace, High5, etc.) to facilitate your connection with friends and family overseas and in Vietnam:

Yes ☐ // No ☐

73- **Which** social networking websites or communication **devises do you use most**?

74- **How important are email communications and Internet social networking** in your life? Crucial ☐ Very important ☐ Relatively important ☐

Not really important ☐ Not important at all ☐

Explain in your own words:

75- What are the main challenges you experience in your personal/family life and through your work in Vietnam?

76- Can you provide examples of difficult situations have you experienced in Vietnam?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR FILLING OUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!

Please save it and send it to expats.in.vietnam.survey@gmail.com

Your participation is anonymous and confidential

Would you like to participate in an interview (by phone or face to face)? YES ☐ NO ☐

Would you like to participate in a focus group in Hanoi? YES ☐ NO ☐

If Yes, Please provide your phone number:

Best time to call:

To reach you, the interviewer will need your name or a pseudonym:

Appendix B

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION (GENERIC)

CURRENT AND RECENT EXPATS IN VIETNAM!

My name is Severine Minot. I am currently conducting my Ph.D. research and seeking to gather reliable data on expats of all nationalities, all walks of life, all sectors of occupation, to reflect the diversity of the expat population in Vietnam – in terms of gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, sexual orientation, family structure and social relations, geographic distribution, etc.

ALL EXPATS ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE!

Reliable sources of data on expats in Vietnam are really rare, that's why a large scale survey is needed! I will gladly share my results upon completion of my research.

The attached survey takes only between 5 and 15 minutes depending on the length of your responses to open ended questions... but most are Yes or No, or short answers and many participants need only 5 minutes to complete it.

I am also using a snowball sampling approach – like word of mouth to get as many respondents as possible. So your help in spreading this call for participation to other expats in Vietnam would be much appreciated.

The consent form and survey are available in 3 formats:
For hard copy, just contact me by email at severineminot@hotmail.com and I will send you a consent form and a survey by mail, with a prepaid return envelop.

For Word form –format, just open the attachment to this email. It is easy to fill out – then Save as you would a normal document – and Send back via email
PLEASE send it back to: expats.in.vietnam.survey@gmail.com

It is also available online, on a secure webpage at
https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dFdKUHZZZmlJa3ctTjE5SDhlOV9MaFE6MQ

Your anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed.

Thank you for participating and passing this survey on to other expats in Vietnam.

Sorry in advance for cross-posting.

Appendix C

CONSENT FORM

SURVEY: EXPATS IN VIETNAM

Please read this consent form before filling out the survey below
****Click the box or provide your signature at the bottom of this form to confirm you have read and agree with the terms of this research.****

Your contribution to this research will help generate data on expatriates living in Vietnam. Reliable sources of data on expatriates in Vietnam are rare. This survey will:

- Generate statistical data on expatriates in Vietnam;
- Uncover key features of the expatriate population in Vietnam, including gender, national and ethnic/racial distribution, occupational profiles, family structures, geographic concentration, patterns in asset management, etc.; and
- Identify respondents who are interested in participating in a phone interview on some of the challenges and coping strategies of living and working in Vietnam.

Phone interviews and focus groups are also being conducted. If you wish to participate in these other activities, you can provide your contact information at the end of the survey.

As a participant, your anonymity will be protected and all data will be coded. The information you provide is confidential. No one will be able to trace information back to you. In reports and publications, pseudonyms will be used to conceal participants' identity. Anonymous coded data will be kept indefinitely as an encrypted and archived database. You have the right to skip any question you may not want to answer. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Should you choose to do so, data generated as a consequence of your participation will be destroyed and this will not affect your relationship with the researcher or York University, now or in the future. This survey contains 76 questions, most require short or fixed selection answers. It should require about 5 to 15 minutes, depending on your answers to open-ended questions.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies' Human Participants Review Committee (HPRC) at York University (Canada) has approved this research. If you have ethical concerns regarding this research, you may contact the Manager of Research Ethics at York University, 309 York Lanes, phone + 001 416-736-5914, or you may contact the Sociology Graduate Program Office at: Vari Hall, Office 2075; 100 York Bld Toronto, ON, Canada; phone: +001 416-736-5013. You may contact the principle investigator, Severine Minot, by email at severineminot@hotmail.com.

PLEASE, CLICK THE BOX BELOW OR SIGN ON THE DOTTED LINE:

(For Word format) ☐ Yes I have read and agree with the terms of this research

(For hard copy) Signature: ……..

Appendix D

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW: EXPATS IN VIETNAM

Please read this consent form before the interview
****Click the box or provide your signature at the bottom of this form to confirm you have read and agree with the terms of this research.****

Your contribution to this research will help generate data on expatriates living in Vietnam. With this semi-structured interview, the researcher seeks to:

- Gain an understanding of the challenges of living and working in Vietnam, how they are perceived and experienced by expatriates
- Identify prevalent adaptation strategies and forms of cross-cultural adjustment
- Gain insight into the subjective experience of expatriates, notably as these pertain to the negotiation of identities and potential transformation.

This consent form is only for the interview portion of this study. As a participant, your anonymity will be protected and all data will be coded. The information you provide is confidential. No one will be able to trace information back to you. In reports and publications, pseudonyms will be used to conceal participants' identity. Anonymous coded data will be kept indefinitely in a secure electronic archive. You may skip any question you do not want to answer. You may also end the interview at any point during the session and you can withdraw from the study at any time. Should you choose to do so, data generated as a consequence of your participation will be destroyed and this will not affect your relationship with the researcher or York University, now or in the future. This semi-structured interview is framed by a series of questions that serve as a rough guide, for an otherwise casual conversation on participants life experience and personal histories. The interview should require between 30 minutes and 2 hours, depending on the natural progression of the exchange.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies' Human Participants Review Committee (HPRC) at York University (Canada) has approved this research. If you have ethical concerns regarding this research, you may contact the Manager of Research Ethics at York University, 309 York Lanes, phone + 001 416-736-5914, or you may contact the Sociology Graduate Program Office at: Vari Hall, Office 2075; 100 York Bld Toronto, ON, Canada; phone: +001 416-736-5013. You may contact the principle investigator, Severine Minot, by email at severineminot@hotmail.com.

PLEASE, CLICK THE BOX BELOW OR SIGN ON THE DOTTED LINE:
(For telephone/Skype interviews).

☐ Yes I have read and agree with the terms of this research

For face-to-face interviews, please sign here:……

Appendix E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1-. Introduction about the format of the interview
2-. Confirmation of informed consent

3-. Background questions
a) How long have you been living in Vietnam?
b) What do you do? How do you occupy your time?
c) What were your various priorities when you just arrived here?
d) What were your first impressions of the country, people and culture?
e) Do you still feel that way?

4) Challenges
a) What are some of the hurdles and common frustrations you have experienced since you arrived? (with living far from home, with the local culture, with the political economic structure, with the infrastructure, etc.)
b) Can you give some examples in different contexts? (at work, at home, with the family, with a spouse/children, out in public, in markets, etc.)
c) Have you experienced cross-cultural tensions in your interactions with Vietnamese nationals?
d) Have you been able to establish close work or friendship relations with Vietnamese?
e) Have you made expat friends?

5) Privileges [social position]
a) Do you feel that you are (dis)advantaged by your nationality?
b) Do you feel that you are (dis)advantaged by your gender?
c) Do you feel that you are (dis)advantaged by your age?
d) Do you feel that you are (dis)advantaged by your professional status or your social class?
e) Can you describe your lifestyle?

6) Adaptation
a) Based on your experience, how have you adapted to the Vietnamese cultural setting?
b) Are their particular skills or aptitudes you've developed in order to navigate your way in different Vietnamese contexts?
c) If you can summarize some of the things you have learned as an expatriate in Vietnam, what would these be?
d) In what ways do you either feel 'at home' or 'not at home' here in Vietnam

7) Identity

a) Do you think you are the 'same person' as when you left your country of origin?

b) Do you feel that you've changed mostly consciously or unconsciously?

c) If anything, how do you think you've changed? (ways of thinking, ways of doing things, patterns of practice, forms of self-reference, or forms of Othering)

d) What is the appeal of an 'expat life' and what were your reason for leaving?

e) Where do you feel you belong?

f) How would you describe yourself to someone who doesn't know you at all (not necessarily another expat or a host country national –just a stranger)?

g) Do you think that living and working in a different culture has changed you in deep fundamental ways?

h) What do you take from your transnational experiences, what memories and impressions what lessons learned stand out in your mind?

Thank you for your participation

Appendix F

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

FOCUS GROUP: EXPATS IN VIETNAM

Please read this consent form before the focus group

****Provide your signature at the bottom of this form to confirm you have read and agree with the terms of this research. (This is a standard academic procedure)****

Your contribution to this research will help generate data on expatriates living in Vietnam. With this focus group, the researcher seeks to:

- Gain an understanding of the impact of different 'life situations' in the process of cross-cultural adjustment.
- Evaluate from a comparative point of view how different experiences are expressed and interpreted subjectively.

This consent form is only for the focus group portion of this study.

As a participant, your anonymity will be protected and all information provided remains confidential. Data will be coded. No one will be able to trace information back to you. In reports and publications, pseudonyms will be used to conceal participants' identity. Focus group sessions will be filmed so that the analysis can account for body language and to avoid voice recognition problems. Once fully transcribed, focus group video will be destroyed. Anonymous coded data will be kept indefinitely in a secure electronic archive. You may choose to skip any question you do not want to answer. You may also leave the focus group session at any point during the session. You can withdraw from the study at any time, in which case the data generated as a consequence of your participation will be destroyed. This will not affect your relationship with the researcher or York University, now or in the future. The focus group session is semi-structured with key themes and questions that serve as guidelines, though these should not disrupt the natural flow of the conversation. Participants are asked to respect each other and contribute to a productive discussion, to allow everyone to open up about their life experience and personal histories. The focus group should require between 2 and 4 hours, depending on the fluidity and natural progression of the exchange.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies' Human Participants Review Committee (HPRC) at York University (Canada) has approved this research. If you have ethical concerns regarding this research, you may contact the Manager of Research Ethics at York University, 309 York Lanes, phone + 001 416-736-5914, or you may contact the Sociology Graduate Program Office at: Vari Hall, Office 2075; 100 York Bld Toronto, ON, Canada; phone: +001 416-736-5013. You may contact the principle investigator, Severine Minot, by email at severineminot@hotmail.com.

PLEASE, SIGN ON THE DOTTED LINE:

Yes I have read and agree with the terms of this research

Signature: ……..

Appendix G

FOCUS GROUP THEMES AND LINES OF QESTIONING

1) Confirmation of informed consent

2) Setting of focus group standard of conduct: respect, listening, productive input, focus on personal experiences, non-judgmental atmosphere.

3) Objectives of focus group: theme and group member introductions

Focus group session 1: The dating scene

4) What is your current 'relationship status'?

5) What are your impressions of the dating scene amongst expatriates and between expatriates and Vietnamese nationals?

6) Are there frustrations that you have faced with regards to the dating scene?

6) Can you share your experience about 'dating' in Vietnam

7) Do you feel that your relationship status influences your priorities or your quality of life as expatriates?

8) What are the pros and cons of being single, of being in a spousal relationship with another expat, or of being with a Vietnamese national?

Focus group session 2: Accompanying expatriate spouses 'with' or 'without' children

4) What is your current relationship and family status?

5) Upon arrival in Vietnam, what were your priorities?

6) What were your household requirements when you settled here?

7) What have been some of the frustrations you have experienced as part of your cross-cultural adjustment?

8) For parents, are their specific anxieties that you have regarding your kids and how do you cope with these?

9) How do you occupy your time? What activities and social circles are you engaged in?

Focus group session 3: Ethnicity and nationality: Skin color differentation

4) What is/are your ethnic/racial origin(s)

5) What is you nationality

6) Do you feel that you are advantaged or disadvantaged on the basis of your skin color? Please explain…

7) Do you feel that you are advantaged or disadvantaged on the basis of your nationality?

8) Have you experienced or noticed forms of racism in Vietnam (positive or negative discrimination on the basis of assumed ethnic/racial categorization)?

9) How significant or insignificant is skin color or ethnicity in the way 'others' treat you? (other expatriates or Vietnamese nationals)

10) Do Vietnamese nationals treat you differently in different settings based on your skin color or ethnic/racial appearance?

11) Do you associate with people who are mostly of your same ethnic background? Or rather do you associate with people who are mostly from different ethnic background? Please describe the ethnic and racial diversity of your social networks.

APPENDIX H

Transcript of Video *Sh*t Expats in Hanoi Say*

Scene One

Expatriate 1: “Asian babies are soooo cute”

Expatriate 2: “Oh my God I want one…”

[In front of a Vietnamese toddler the expatriate says]

Expatriate 2: “I just want to put you in my purse”

[later the exptriate says]

Expatriate 2: “No I don’t want kids”

Scene One hints at the objectification of the ‘Other’

Scene Two

[Holding a large Bill of 500,000 VND]

Expatriate 2: Do you have small

[Holding a small T-shirt in front of her]

Expatriate 2: Do you have this in large

Scene Two highlights the problems of scale – Expatriates with large bills of money that can’t easily be changed by street merchants contrasted to the ‘small size’ of Asian clothing which rarely fit most Westerners

Scene Three

[Expatriate is shopping in a 'conventional' Western style grocery store and expressing nostalgia]

Expatriate 2: That's the only thing I miss about home

Scene Three emphasizes the preference for shopping in conventional Western grocery store and expatriates experience of missing certain conveniences

Scene Four

Expatriate 2: No I'm not an English teacher

Expatriate 2: I work for an NGO

Expatriate 2: We sell hybrid electric vehicles to underprivileged children

[Drunk in the evening, leaning on her friend]

Expatriate 2: I just feel like I'm giving back… you know

Scene Four highlights the importance of occupational differentiations and the neoliberal agenda of development initiative and expatriates' sense of 'social' contribution.

Scene Five

Expatriate 2: I mean all my friends are at home working these 9 to 5 jobs and I'm here living the life… [looks to the right] was that a rat?!

Expatriate 2: What? You don't have a maid…

Expatriate 2: Lets go get two-dollar manicures…

Scene five emphasizes the status and lifestyle of expatriates

Scene Six

Expatriate 2: It's soooo hot

Expatriate 2: It's soooo cold

Scene Six exemplifies the common complaints of expatriates in Hanoi in relation to the weather and common infrastructural inadequacies – needing air conditioning in the summer and needing heating in the winter

Scene Seven

Expatriate 2: Một Bún bò Nam Bộ [inadequately pronounced]

Restaurant staff repeats "Một Bún bò Nam Bộ" with proper pronounciation –which sounds quite different

Expatriate 2: That's exactly what I said…

On the phone

Expatriate 2: That's exactly what I said…

In a different restaurant

Expatriate 2: Em oi, tinh tien [badly pronounced]

Expatriate 2: tien tien a [butchered version of 'tinh tien']

Expatriate 2: Em oi, tanh tin [even worse version of 'Em oi tinh tien]

Expatriate 2: How do you say soya sauce again?

Expatriate 2: Em oi, tien … Check yeah!

[Exaptriates having a manicure]

Expatriate 2: I mean I want to take lessons I just don't have the time

Expatriate 2: Em oi, tinh tien [badly pronounced]

Expatriate 2: tinh tien [badly pronounced]

Expatriate 2: Of course I hang out with locals

…

[Expatriate is cleaning the restaurant table with disinfectant gel]

Expatriate 2: Well I mean I'm conversant.

Expatriate 2: ding dong [means nothing]

[Back at the manicure shop – the manicurists talk to each other]

Expatriate 1: You think they're talking about us?

Scene Seven highlight the language difficulties and the awkwardness of foreigners when they massacre the language, while also poking fun at the illegitimate excuse of having no time to learn Vietnamese.

Scene Eight

Expatriate 2: I love Vietnamese food

[Expatriate is eating sushi]

[Expatriate is eating pizza]

[Expatriate is eating a burger]

[In front of Pho' –a Vietnamese soup]

Expatriate 2: does this have MSG?

Expatirate 2: No I'm a vegetarian

Scene Eight highlights expatriates' inclination to indulge in 'Western' comfort food and international foods – denoting their cosmopolitanism, their status (foreign food is costly) but also their frame of reference and dietary preferences.

Scene Nine

[Rooster sings –Expatriate in bed with pillow over her head]

Expatriate 2: I'm gonna kill that rooster

[In grocery store]

Expatriate 2: Excuse me, do you have earplugs… oh you don't work here … sorry

Scene nine shows expatriates out of their element – unfamiliar and annoyed with the next door rooster –

Scene 10

[Screams over the noise of the traffic]

Expatriate 2: Oh I've got terrible diarrhea!

Hints at a common problem when living in foreign countries though the scene denotes the awkwardness of the subject matter in public and the assumption that no one understands if it is said in English.

Scene 11

[Interacting with a Vietamese]

Expatrite 2: No I'm not married

[Interacting with a foreigner at a bar]

Expatriate 2: So how long have you lived here?

[In a different setting]

Expatriate 2: What do you do?

[In a restaurant]

Expatrite 2: How long have you lived here? Oh You've only been here 6 months, that cute…

[In a bar]

Expatriate 2: What? You're just passing through? Excuse me [expatriate turns and leave]

[In an alley]

Expatriate 2: Too many tourists

[In a restaurant – expatriate friend takes a picture of the food]

Expatriate 2: hurh, you're such a tourist

[On the phone – crossing the street]

Exptriate 2: I don't want to go there, that place is in the lonely planet

[Different setting]

Expatriate 3: backpackers…

Expatriate 2: tsss [smirk]

[Different setting]

Expatriate 2: What? You hooked up with a couch surfer?

Scene 11 highlight the ridicule of expatriates' tendency to complain about the repetitive nature of questions they receive from Vietnamese –Are you married, contrasted with the

repretitive nature of expatriates encounters with other foreigners, and their need to differentiate themselves from tourists, and maintain boundaries between them and tourists.

Scene 12

[Coming out of a croud, looking tired]

Expatriate 1: Let's go for a massage

Expatriate 2: Nice

[At the massage parlour]

Expatriate 2: I left my Iphone in the taxi

[In the street]

Exptriate 2: huh, I need a massage after that massage

[In a taxi]

Expatriate 2: West Lake is such an expat ghetto

With a Vietnamese food vendor

Expatriate 2: No I'm not married

[At the gym doing Yoga]

Expatriate 2: there's not a lot of hot Western guys in Hanoi

[In a bar]

Expatriate 2: there's so many pretty girls here…

[In bed on the phone]

Expatriate 2: I think I made out with him at Phuc Tan last night [Phuc Tan is a local after-hours danceclub]

Scene 12 highlight various elements notably the lifestyle of expatirates, their concentration into West lake (Hanoi's main expatriate district), the sexual availability of expatirate women and their preference for Wesern men, the sense of competition against pretty Vietnamese women, etc.

Scene 13

Exptriate 2: I saw it on the new Hanoian

Exptriate 2: I read it on Hanoi grapevine

Exptriate 2: I saw a poster for it in Joma [Joma is an artsy coffee shop]

Exptriate 2: I read it in the Word magazine

Scene 13 focuses on the main information outlets that expatriates in Hanoi are likely to use

Scene 14

[At the gym]

Exptriate 2: Why does my xe om driver keeps calling me? [a xe om driver is a motorbike taxi driver]

[On a motorbike –attaching a helmet]

Exptriate 2: Dude you gotta get a motorbike

[In a restaurant]

Exptriate 2: I almost died five times today

[In an underground parking full of motorbikes]

Exptriate 2: where did I park?

[At a coffee shop]

Exptriate 2: I love my motorbike

[In an alley struggling to move the motorbike]

Exptriate 2: I hate this fucking motorbike

[As a passenger on a motorbike]

Exptriate 2: People cannot drive here…

… [expatriate driving awkwardly on her motorbike]

Scene 14 is centered on the problems of mobility, the traffic and the quirks of owning/driving a motorbike.

Scene 15

[on the phone]

Exptriate 2: what? No, I'm not married

[At a restaurant]

Exptriate 2: Everything is so cheap here

[In a taxi]

Exptriate 2: Hanoi is getting expensive

[At the massage parlour]

Exptriate 2: huh, my tailor is amazing

[At the park]

Exptriate 2: She made my jeans for five dollars, she wanted seven but I bargained her down.

Scene 15 locates expatriates in their market relations, highlighting their rapport to money and value.